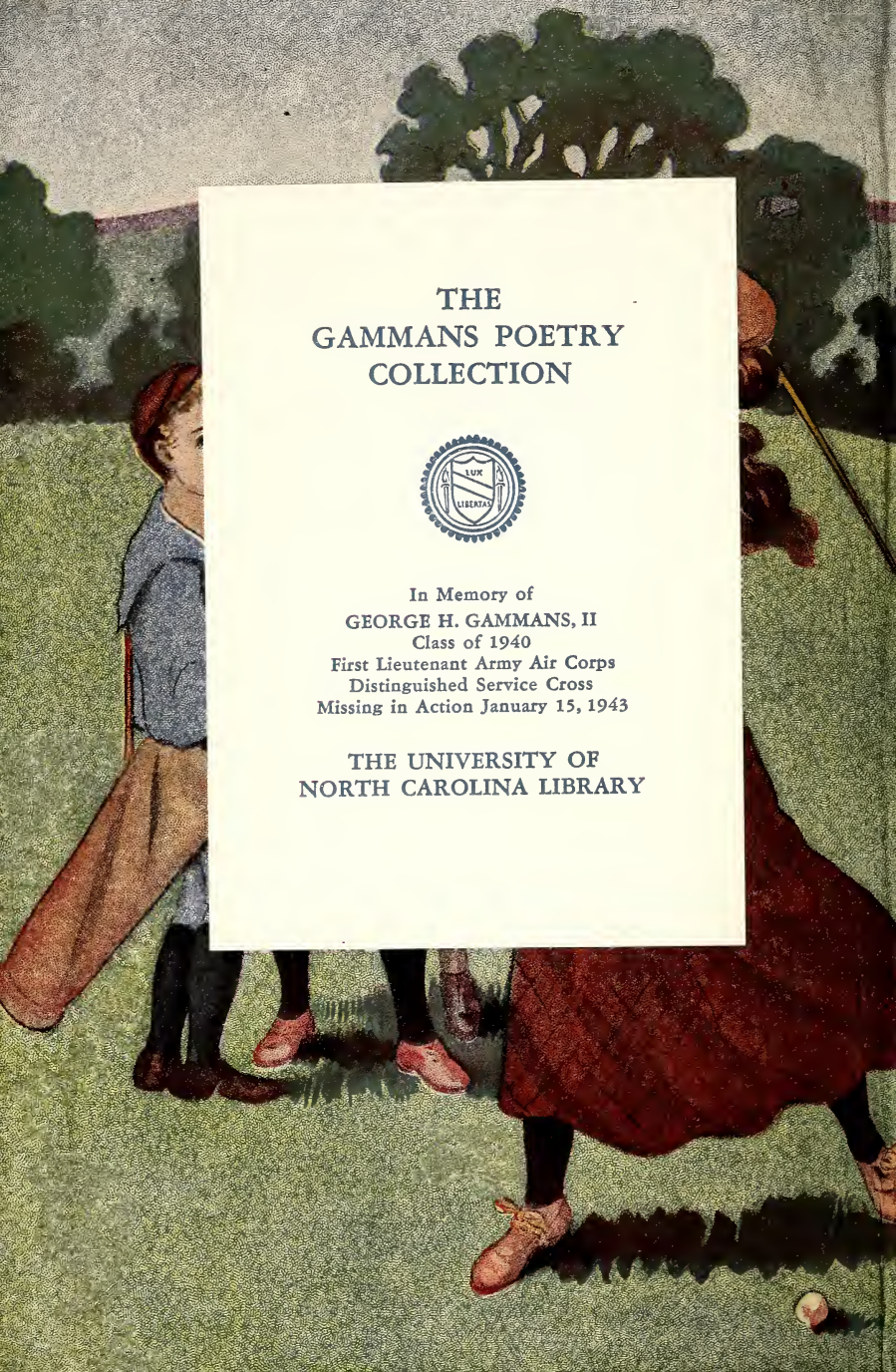
THE CRUISE OF THE FIREFLY

BY
EDWARD
S. ELLIS



THE GAMMANS POETRY COLLECTION

In Memory of
GEORGE H. GAMMANS, II
Class of 1940
First Lieutenant Army Air Corps
Distinguished Service Cross
Missing in Action January 15, 1943

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL
00022085841

This **BOOK** may be kept out **TWO WEEKS ONLY**, and is subject to a fine of **FIVE CENTS** a day thereafter. It is **DUE** on the **DAY** indicated below:

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

http://www.archive.org/details/cruiseoffirefly00elli

UP AND DOING SERIES

THE CRUISE OF THE FIREFLY

To Arthur —
With love and best wishes
for "A Merry Christmas"
from — Uncle Harry

Indianapolis Indiana
December 25th 1907

They shot over the Abyss. see page 289

The Cruise of the Firefly

By Edward S. Ellis

Author of "Deerfoot Series," "Young Pioneer Series," "Log Cabin Series," "The New Deerfoot Series," etc., etc.

and

Wm. Pendleton Chipman, D.D.

ILLUSTRATED
By EDWIN J. PRITTIE

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY
CHICAGO PHILADELPHIA TORONTO

COPYRIGHT 1906, BY THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.
Copyright 1890, by the Holiday Publishing Co.

CONTENTS

			PAGE
CHAP.	I.	AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE	9
CHAP.	II.	AN EXCITING OFFER	17
CHAP.	III.	A DESPICABLE PLOT	24
CHAP.	IV.	THE RACE	34
CHAP.	V.	CRIPPLE BEN'S INVITATION .	44
CHAP.	VI.	FURTHER PLOTTING	56
CHAP.	VII.	CAUGHT IN A GALE	63
CHAP.	VIII.	THE LAUNCH FIREFLY . . .	73
CHAP.	IX.	AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY	85
CHAP.	X.	THE SMASHED BOAT	98
CHAP.	XI.	THE DESPOILED TENTS . .	107
CHAP.	XII.	THE LOUP-CERVIERS	115
CHAP.	XIII.	THE HIDDEN CAMP	126

E672

			PAGE
CHAP.	XIV.	INTERCEPTED	135
CHAP.	XV.	HARRY'S MISFORTUNE . . .	148
CHAP.	XVI.	IN A TIGHT PLACE	157
CHAP.	XVII.	THE MISSING PELTS	167
CHAP.	XVIII.	AN UNPLEASANT WRANGLE	174
CHAP.	XIX.	A MIDNIGHT ALARM	185
CHAP.	XX.	LOST IN THE MOUNTAIN . .	193
CHAP.	XXI.	THE INDIAN CAMP	203
CHAP.	XXII.	A STARTLING ACCUSATION .	213
CHAP.	XXIII.	AN HONORABLE PROPOSAL .	224
CHAP.	XXIV.	ON THE TRAIL	235
CHAP.	XXV.	A MIDNIGHT DESERTION . .	244
CHAP.	XXVI.	A HARD NUT TO CRACK . .	253
CHAP.	XXVII.	A CRY FOR HELP	266
CHAP.	XXVIII.	OVER THE FALLS	278
CHAP.	XXIX.	AULD LANG SYNE	290
CHAP.	XXX.	NEAR OF KIN	301

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

FRONTISPIECE: THEY SHOT OVER THE ABYSS

"HURRAH, THE PASSAGE IS CLEAR" 42

"WE MUST OVERHAUL THEM, BOYS" 147

FIGHTING THE WOLVES 209

THE CRUISE OF THE FIREFLY

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE

ON THE brow of a large hill, just without and overlooking the village and river of Melrose, in one of the more prominent of the eastern States, are the buildings of the Melrose Valley Institute, a highly popular boarding school for boys.

Into the extensive play-grounds at the rear of these buildings, one bright May afternoon, after the day's routine of study was over, there poured a crowd of students, from twelve to eighteen years of age, armed with bats and mallets and racquets, eager for the hour's sport.

Suddenly above the babel of noises the voice of Harry Wallace, the leading spirit in all the athletic games at the Institute and the captain of the boat-club, rang out loud and clear—

"This way, members of the M. V. I. Boat-Club, this way! I have a surprise for you."

Instantly five of the older and more stalwart of the lads gathered around him.

"A surprise?" echoed Tom Sexsmith, the bow stroke of the crew, and an irrepressible wag in his way. "Can it be the doctor has given you an extra page of the Anabasis to—"

"Oh, my!" broke in Rob Hunt, another of the squad, "just as though there could be any surprise in that. Come, Wallace, let up on our curiosity, and tell us what's in the wind."

"The M. H. S. crew have had the audacity to challenge us to a race." Captain Harry immediately announced, in tones that implied his expectation of arousing the incredulity of his hearers.

"You don't say so!" cried several voices at once with well-feigned astonishment.

"What can they be thinking of? Do they mean to give us a walk-over?" inquired Tom Sexsmith a moment later, and with an indescribable grimace.

When the hearty laugh that his words and act had aroused subsided, Ed Willis, another of the crew, asked:

"Can they really be in earnest?"

"I rather think they are! Listen!" replied Harry Wallace, drawing a paper from his pocket, and reading it aloud:

MELROSE, May 20th, 19—.

To Mr. Harry Wallace, Captain of the M. V. I. Boat-Club:

SIR: The boat-club of which I have the honor to be captain has authorized me to challenge your club to a six-oared race on the Melrose River, at such a time and place as may be arranged by a joint-committee appointed for that purpose, provided, of course, you conclude to accept. Hoping to receive a favorable response at an early date, I remain,

Truly yours,

REED JONES.

"He comes right to the point, and no mistake," declared Rob Hunt, with a prolonged whistle. "What shall we do about it, Harry?"

"Do? There is but one thing to do; accept of course! Why, this is the best streak of luck that has come to us in the whole year. If we can add this to our season's triumphs over them the star of M. V. I. will surely be in the ascendancy."

"Rah! rah! rah! tiger!" cried his comrades, swinging their caps in the air. "When is the race to come off?"

"Probably in about two weeks," explained Wallace. "You see we must have time to complete our arrangements."

"Not under two weeks," said one of the crew, with a disappointed air.

"Of course not, Williams; but we can send

in our acceptance to-day. In fact, I have it with me; how do you like this?"

MELROSE, May 21st, 19—.

Mr. Reed Jones, Captain of the M. H. S. Boat-Club:

MY DEAR SIR: It gives us pleasure to accept your challenge to a race, and we shall appoint a committee of three this evening to consult with a similar committee from your club as to the necessary arrangements. We need not add that we shall do our best to win one more victory for the M. V. I. over the M. H. S.

HARRY WALLACE,
Captain of the M. V. I. Boat-Club.

"That's right! Hurrah!" cried the majority of the lads, though one or two thought the last sentence unnecessary, as there was no need of reminding the M. H. S. of their humiliating defeats.

But, on the whole, the reply was quite satisfactory, and was sent down to the village office at once.

A strong rivalry in all out-door sports had long existed between the students of the Melrose Valley Institute and those of the Melrose High School. Possibly something of this spirit was due to the fact that Dr. Randall, the principal of the Institute, had some years previous been the head master of the High School, but owing to some disagreement with the town au-

thorities over the school management he had resigned and established the Institute upon the hill.

With a strong backing from many of Melrose's most influential citizens, and a large personal influence as an educator throughout the eastern States, Dr. Randall made his institution from the very outset a decided success. But those who had the management of the High School still maintained a hostile attitude toward the more prosperous seat of learning, and that feeling, unconsciously perhaps, was shared by the students of each institution.

The High School attendants had from the beginning sought to draw those of the Institute into every form of athletic contest, and for several years were more than a match for the aggressive incomers, but within the last few months there had come a change.

When Harry Wallace entered the Institute—the fall before the opening of our story—a new impetus was given to all athletic and gymnastic exercises. His fine physical development, personal magnetism, and extraordinary skill in all sports, drew around him a crowd of comrades, whom he soon trained to a dexterity scarcely less than his own.

Under his drill the base-ball nine, the foot-

ball team, the cricket and lawn-tennis clubs, had all been brought to a degree of expertness which had enabled them easily to vanquish their village opponents in every contest.

The increasing triumphs of the M. V. I.'s made them, it must be acknowledged, vain-glorious, and they lost no opportunity to remind their antagonists of their departing prestige.

This had naturally deepened the hostile feeling between the inmates of the two schools, and for some weeks they had nothing to do with each other. In fact, the M. V. I.'s began to think their opponents had decided to retire from the field, confessing themselves vanquished, when this challenge to the boat-race unexpectedly came and apprised them of their mistake.

"This is only a resort to recover their former glory," remarked Tom Sexsmith to Harry Wallace, as they left their companions and walked down to the ball-ground.

"Only beat them now, and they'll never crow again."

"We must do it," replied Wallace emphatically. "In no year of their triumphs have they won a clean score of victories. Give us this boat-race and we have such a record, and it will go a long way toward wiping out the disgrace of a long and continuous series of defeats."

At a meeting of the boat-club that evening a committee of three was chosen to arrange with a like board of the M. H. S. the preparations for the race. In the course of another day the latter club responded, and the joint-committee came together to make such arrangements as were necessary.

The race was to be a six-oared one, and was to take place two weeks from the following Saturday afternoon on the Melrose, the river running through the town, and at the foot of the hill upon which the Institute stood.

The boats were to start from a point called Old Field, and run up the river three miles to the Narrows. This course, which had been rowed over many times by both crews, was all that could be desired, except at one place known as Long Bar, where a sandy point, jutting out from the left bank, made a sharp angle to the river.

At high water only the extreme end of this huge arm rose like an island above the flood, and boats could cross the neck to save two or three rods in distance. This, however, was a hazardous undertaking to one unacquainted with the passage. At low water the place was barely covered.

The committee of arrangements, knowing two

boats could not safely pass abreast at this place, wisely decided, to avoid all trouble, by ordering that both shells should keep within the deep channel to the right.

This decision was satisfactory to the contesting parties, and, the preliminaries over, a fair though exciting race was anticipated.

CHAPTER II

AN EXCITING OFFER

A WEEK later, Rob Hunt dropped into Wallace's room during recreation hours.

"I say, Harry," was his greeting, "did you know the whole village is getting wild over our coming race?"

"I had heard something like it," answered he with a smile, and laying down the book he was reading; "and don't know that I am surprised. But what difference does it make to us any way?"

"Why, nothing," went on Rob, "only the bigger half is siding with the M. H. S. crew, and are arranging to give them a grand ovation—music, speeches and supper, and all that sort of thing—if they win."

"That last clause is well put," remarked Harry. "Let them make all the preparations they please in that direction; it will only render our victory the more glorious, their defeat the more humiliating, because unexpected. But who are the prime movers in this thing?"

"There is where you get me, Wallace. I can't find out anything sure. Jack Howard does the most of the talking. Only this morning I met him, and he said the town club would come in ten lengths ahead of us, and offered to bet me five to one on that."

"I hope you didn't take the bet, Rob, and that none of the other lads are betting on the race," said his comrade with evident anxiety. "Whatever the High School boys may do, let us go through this thing in a square and honorable way. I'd rather be beaten than to win unfairly, or to do anything so debasing as to bet on the result."

"I'm with you there," was Hunt's quick reply. "It is hinted, however, that our opponents may not be so particular, but will leave no stone unturned to gain the victory by fair means or by foul."

"If Jack Howard were one of the crew, I would believe that," answered Harry; "but I think Jones is above anything underhand."

"I'm not so sure of that," broke in Rob; "he and Howard are as thick as peas in a pod, and by their talk you'd think they were going into the thing out of personal spite. Have they anything against you, Wallace?"

"Howard may think so," replied Harry with

a hearty laugh. "He hasn't been over and above friendly since my tussle with him last fall."

"What was that?"

"Oh! I caught him teasing Cripple Ben. He had thrown the boy's crutches away, and was laughing and jeering at the poor fellow's efforts to crawl along to them. I interfered, gave the lad his sticks, and told Jack he ought to be in better business than that. He riled up and pitched into me, and in the struggle that followed I threw him into the river. I didn't mean to duck him, but he went for me so furiously I had to or get a wetting myself."

"And served him just right, too. I remember all about it now. Well, he is doing his best to defeat us. Perhaps Reed is setting him on."

"I hardly think so. I have a better opinion of him than that," said Harry.

"Time will tell," remarked Hunt dryly and rising to go. "Anyway, if no one is going to prepare a big supper for us, we will go in for the victory just the same."

"Of course we will," returned Wallace, warmly; "but we are by no means alone. Many of the town people are in sympathy with us, and the whole school will back us. I believe the Doctor himself, though he might not own it,

would be wonderfully tickled if we should win."

The next day proved that Wallace had not over-estimated the principal's interest in the coming race, for, at the close of the chapel exercises, he detained the students a few minutes, to say:

"Young gentlemen, the extraordinary excitement in town over an event which is soon to occur ought, perhaps, to receive some notice from me. While I deplore any feeling in this matter other than an honest pride in the club for which we may naturally have a preference, I understand the present circumstances well enough to say I shall not be displeased if the victory comes to the Institute. For some years we have been forced into athletic contests with the other institution of learning in the town, and have manfully swallowed our defeats. Now that the triumphs are falling into our hands, they are displaying a spirit anything but commendable. I only caution you to say nothing unkind of your opponents. Be honorable in all your dealings with them. Above all, so far as you are concerned, see to it that the race is a fair one, stained by no underhand or debasing features. Then if the victory shall come to you, it will not only be worth the obtaining, but may, as has been suggested by one of your number,

put an end to the foolish rivalry which has so long existed between the two schools."

"My!" cried Tom Sexsmith, as he walked with Harry Wallace over to the class-room; "the Doctor has woke up, hasn't he? Did you ever hear of his taking interest enough in any sport before to speak of it in the chapel? I tell you we are getting famous, old boy," and he brought his right hand down upon his companion's shoulder with a force that fairly made him wince.

"We have both honor and reason enough now to go into this race to win," replied Wallace, with a sparkle in his eyes.

But he and his comrades were destined to have a greater incentive than this to do their best; for the day before the race came off Harry received the following surprising letter from his father, a wealthy manufacturer in another State:

WORCESTER, MASS., June 7th, 18—.

"My Dear Boy:

"Not only through your own letters, but from Dr. Randall himself, I have learned of your coming boat-race, and the unusual excitement it has created in Melrose; and I write to tell you that your mother, sisters and myself, with a host of friends and relatives of the other students, ex-

pect to be in the village to arouse your enthusiasm by our presence, sympathy and cheers.

"More than this. Learning of the stupendous incentives offered the other crew by some of the town's people, we have thought it no more than fair that you and your crew should also be spurred to your best by these no less tantalizing offers:

"If you win, a pair of silk banners, suitably inscribed, shall be presented you, to be preserved in the archives of the institution as mementoes of your victory.

"In addition to this offer, which comes from a number of the friends of the Institute, I make this personal announcement: that I will defray the entire expenses of yourself and crew for a two months' camp out at any place you and they may choose from Maine to Labrador. Thus your long-cherished wish may be gratified, and under circumstances that cannot but render the excursion an extremely pleasant one.

"I would say, also, that I have secured the consent of the parents of all your comrades that they may accompany you, and you can be off as soon after the close of the school-term as your arrangements will allow.

"Could I offer you a greater inducement to win the race! Your father,

JOHN WALLACE."

Harry did not read this letter to his crew until they were all equipped for their last practice row over the course that afternoon. As might be expected, they were wild with enthusiasm, and buckling their belts a little tighter about them they grasped their oars, and at the com-

mand of their captain shot out into the river. Faster and faster they went, all together and with a will and dash which, if maintained the following day, could not help, it seemed, but insure them the victory. Never had they pulled together that way before.

CHAPTER III

A DESPICABLE PLOT

OLD FIELD POINT, where the race on the morrow was to begin, was situated, as already intimated, a little below the village proper. Struggling houses, however, ran down the river bank to it, the last one, a low and dilapidated structure, being, in fact, but a few rods from its extremity.

At the door of this cabin (for it was scarcely more than that), a lad of about sixteen years was sitting on that Friday afternoon that the M. V. I. boat-crew came down for their last practice. He saw the shell as it took its place at the starting-line, and watched with eager interest, though he could not hear a word of Harry Wallace as he read his father's letter to his companions; then he beheld the frail boat dash away up the stream at a speed he had never seen the oarsmen attain before.

"Whew! ain't they cutting the water though," he exclaimed with manifest delight. "If they only row like that to-morrow the race

is theirs sure; and on Harry's account I do hope they'll win it."

The last words were uttered with a tremulousness that disclosed the fact that the manly captain of the Institute crew held for some reason a warm place in the speaker's heart; nor will this seem strange to the reader when he is told that the watching lad was Cripple Ben, the same youth whose part Wallace had taken some months before, and rescued from the hands of Jack Howard.

As the boat disappeared around the bend at Long Bar, the boy reached out his hands to a pair of crutches leaning against the side of the building, and with their help assumed an upright position.

We see at once that he is of good size, with a noble head, and a face that bespeaks intelligence and decisiveness of character. There is about him a neatness and an air of manly independence, also, which makes even his coarse and patched clothing seem respectable and attractive.

But our admiration for the lad changes to pity when we notice his limbs; for these are so contracted and twisted out of shape by disease as to be practically useless. We feel a natural anxiety, moreover, to know more about him.

Benjamin Probert, or Cripple Ben, as he was usually called, was the only child of John and Mary Probert. The father had been a seafaring man, the captain and part owner of a fishing-smack sailing from Thomaston, a small port at the mouth of the Melrose River.

When Ben was twelve years of age, however, Captain Probert sailed on what proved to be his last voyage. In a severe gale, which played havoc among the fishing vessels on the banks that season, the *Swan* was wrecked and all her crew perished.

The smack was not insured, moreover, and Mrs. Probert therefore found herself not only unexpectedly left a widow, but also comparatively destitute. For a while she and her boy did their best to maintain the home they had been accustomed to, but the times were hard, and the struggle, though long and persistent, finally ended in their giving up the house where they had so long lived, and moving into the cabin at Old Field Point.

Up to this time Ben had been a well and hearty lad; but, as though their misfortunes were not already great enough, there now came the one which left the boy an unfortunate cripple.

It was the spring he was thirteen years old;

he had gone with a neighbor in a yawl down into the outside bay, five miles below Melrose, to trawl after mackerel. A blinding snow-squall came up, and they were driven out to sea. All the following night, through the storm and cold, they toiled to keep the little craft afloat and themselves from being frozen to death, and the next morning were picked up in an exhausted condition by an incoming vessel.

The man never recovered from the sickness that followed that exposure, and for months the lad lay helpless upon his bed. At length, however, he was able to go about on crutches, and so had he been obliged ever since to go, the contracted muscles obstinately refusing under all treatment to return to their normal condition.

During the weeks of his protracted illness the mother watched faithfully by his bedside, and when he was out again had set herself resolutely to the task of paying the debts that through that time had necessarily accumulated.

Ben was eager to aid his mother in this work, but at first found that he was able to do little more than care for the house in her absence.

Few knew how that mother and son denied themselves, and hoarded their little earnings until the last dollar of debt was paid. Then a little more was saved, and a light boat was pur-

chased for the boy's use, and in favorable weather he was usually to be seen on the river fishing. He soon knew the favorite haunts of the different kinds of fish that frequented the stream, and became an expert angler for his years, finding a ready market for all he caught at the village.

But, after all, what he earned was not a large sum, and on the mother the burden of their support still rested. Ben chafed more over this than any other thing. He could stand the jeers and mockery of the thoughtless youth at his infirmity; he could get along with scanty fare and patched clothing; but when he say his mother's tired and wan face his heart, in spite of himself, would sometimes rebel at his lot, and he would long for his old health and strength that he might be her full support.

Still, on the whole, he was of a cheerful disposition, and on this particular afternoon was in the best of spirits. He had had good luck that morning fishing, and had sold his catch for a half dollar, a large sum to him; then he was rejoicing that there was so good a prospect that the boy who had befriended him was likely to win the race over which the town was so thoroughly excited.

He had met Harry Wallace but a few times

since his kindness, and then only to give him a few words of greeting; but Ben was not one who readily forgot a favor, and in his heart he cherished not only a warm regard for the boy who had dared to interfere in his behalf, but a secret determination to repay his kindness at the first opportunity. Though he himself would quickly have acknowledged that he didn't know how or when such an opportunity could possibly occur.

He stood there on his crutches that afternoon for some minutes after the shell had disappeared up the river; then he said aloud:

"I guess I'll take my pole and go down to the river after some perch for supper. The tide is nearly in, and I can catch them right off the point."

He hobbled around the corner of the house and got his pole and bait, and then went slowly down to the shore. The bank of the river at that place was a little steep, but he was used to it; and, first sliding down the pole which he had managed to bring along by pressing it tightly under one arm close to his crutch, he scrambled down himself. Then creeping upon a large rock that projected well out into the stream he baited his hook and proceeded to business. The voracious perch, or cunners, took hold briskly, and

in a short time he had a dozen or more of fair size upon his string.

"I guess there are as many as ma and I'll eat," he remarked, eyeing the flopping fish with some satisfaction. Then he wound up the line and began his return to the cabin.

The ascent of the bank was more difficult for him than the descent, but he had long since learned how to manage it. The fish were tossed well up toward the top, and the pole was laid against the bank so he could reach its upper end from the summit; then he slowly and carefully advanced his crutches up the steep grade, drawing himself along after them.

Just as his head reached the top of the bank he suddenly stopped. Within a rod or two of him were Reed Jones and Jack Howard; and, recalling how often he had been tormented by them, he thought it wiser to avoid meeting them now, and so crouched down under some adjacent shrubbery until they should pass.

But they paused so near that he could not help hearing their conversation.

"There, Reed," said Jack, "you can see Long Bar from here, and just this side of it you will notice the stretch of reedy bank I was telling you about. At high water, as it is now and will be to-morrow afternoon, a boat properly guided

can at that point glide over the shoals and gain a length. As it is this side of the Bar, and nothing has been said against it by the committee of arrangements, it will of course be fair for either of you to take advantage of it. I have several times noticed that Wallace and his crew have dashed across there, and evidently they are intending to gain a length on you in that way tomorrow. This gives me the chance to fix up my little plan."

Up to this point Ben had no intention of being an eaves-dropper; but as these words fell from Howard's lips he would not have disclosed his presence for the world. With ears strained, he listened to catch every word.

"In that passage-way," Jack went on, "I shall to-night drive down two or three stakes, leaving their tops an inch or two under the water, and when Wallace dashes through there he will strike one or the other of them, and" —with a laugh—"not go much farther."

"But," objected Jones, "won't he be apt to see them and avoid them, and so get an actual start on me; or, if stranded there, may he not make a fuss and have the race called off?"

"I have provided for both of those possibilities," replied Howard quickly. "In case he passes through all right I shall be in a shell

just around the island end of the bar, and shall manage so that while I seem to be making every effort to get out of the way, I really foul with him. Then all you have to do is to pull straight away for the goal."

"It may work," remarked Jones gloomily; "we must have something of that kind to win, for we can't begin to pull the stroke they did this afternoon. I timed them up yonder. Can't you arrange to just delay the other boat without actually fouling with them? Only let us get a length or two in the lead, and we are all right."

"I'll take care of that, if necessary," answered Jack; "but I don't think it will be, for the stakes will fix them in the reedy passage. I was going to tell you, also, that I have arranged so they will not get us into trouble. I have pulled up some water-soaked posts down at Nichol's water fence, and shall put them in up there. Then should an investigation be ordered they will think the sticks have been there for months, only Wallace and his crew didn't happen to strike them before," and the fellow laughed heartily at his despicable trick.

The conspirators now retraced their steps toward the village. As soon as they were out of sight Ben hobbled up the bank, and gathering

up his pole and fish crossed over to the cabin, muttering to himself:

"A nice little plot, Jack Howard, but it won't work this time, not if Cripple Ben knows what he is about."

CHAPTER IV

THE RACE

ON ARRIVING at the house Ben did not seem to be in any hurry to carry out the purpose his soliloquy had implied he was contemplating; for he built a fire in the kitchen stove and filled the tea-kettle with water. Then he cleaned and cooked his fish, and when his mother returned from her work at a little past six o'clock an inviting though simple repast was upon the table.

The boy had in his make-up a touch of refinement and thoughtfulness that was hardly to be expected of one in his surroundings, for he had collected and arranged with considerable artistic skill a bouquet of wild flowers at his mother's plate; beside it, too, was a single orange, which out of his money earned that day he had bought for her.

Little as were these acts, the mother understood them, and the fond look she gave her son as she took her seat opposite to him had in it a wealth of affection deep and abiding. Love,

which can make the humblest home a heaven, evidently dwelt beneath that dilapidated roof.

Not until the supper was finished, and the dishes washed and put away in the tiny cupboard for the night, did the lad give any intimation that he had any special plan he intended to execute. Then, however, he put on his hat and took his crutches, saying:

"I have to go up to the village, mother, and may be gone some time; but you needn't worry, as I shall be back as soon as possible."

"Up to the village to-night!" exclaimed she in great surprise, for Ben seldom went out after nightfall. "What are you going up there for?"

The boy had no secrets from his mother, and briefly recounted the plot he had overheard, and added:

"I'm going up to the Institute to tell Harry Wallace all about it."

"Of course he ought to know it," assented Mrs. Probert, "but won't the morning do just as well? I hate to have you go up there in the dark."

"No," replied Ben, with the decisiveness which characterized him when once his mind was made up; "he ought to know it to-night, so

as to have time for offsetting those fellows. I shall get along all right."

His mother remonstrated no further, but looked anxiously after him until he disappeared up the street.

It was quite a distance to the village, and nearly as far out on the opposite side to the Institute. There was also the high hill to climb, but Ben hobbled slowly along, and in a little less than an hour had reached his destination.

Of the janitor, whom he found in the main corridor of the dormitory, he inquired for Harry Wallace, and was kindly told:

"He rooms on the third floor of the west division, but it will be too much for you to climb up two pairs of stairs to him; wait a moment and I will send him down to you."

The hour from seven to eight in the evening was given the students at the Institute for social visiting, and Harry was therefore at liberty to respond to the janitor's call. Leaving the members of his boat-crew, who were all gathered in his room eagerly discussing the race of the next day, and the jolly trip in prospect if they were only victorious, he went down to the outer door to meet the waiting Ben.

"Good evening," he said cordially, and offering his hand to the cripple boy; "the janitor

says you have something special to tell me."

"Yes," Ben replied, shaking the extended hand heartily; "but I must see you alone, and where we will not be overheard." Then noticing Harry's surprised look, he continued in a low tone: "It is about the race to-morrow."

"Wait a moment," Harry promptly replied; "my room is too far up for you to climb there, and then it is full of the fellows; but I'll find a place."

The janitor, who had descended with Harry to the lower hall, was still within call, and Harry hurried over to him and consulted with him a brief time in low tones.

Then he returned with the man to Ben, saying:

"The janitor will let us into one of the classrooms in the next building, where we can talk undisturbed."

Three minutes thereafter the two boys were alone, and Ben quickly told his story. If Harry was surprised at the revelation, he gave no evidence of it; perhaps it was nothing more than he expected of his opponents. Whistling softly to himself for a few moments after Ben had finished his tale, as though in deep thought, he then said:

"I can take care of Howard and his boat, and

now, that I know of his purpose, I don't care the snap of my fingers for all the fouling with us he may do; but I should like to have those stakes taken out of the reedy passage. You see if we don't go through there now, the other crew will at once suspect we have discovered this plot, and I'd rather they wouldn't have any such idea. I want it to look just as though we knew nothing of their intentions, and whatever takes place to-morrow was but a natural miscarriage of their plans."

"I see," responded Ben, with quick intuition grasping his friend's arrangement for thwarting the whole plot, "and I'll fix it about those stakes. You can go through there all right to-morrow; they sha'n't be in your way."

"But it is too much to ask you to take them out," protested Harry, glancing unintentionally perhaps at Ben's crippled form.

"No, it isn't," the boy resolutely declared; "I'm as strong in my arms as any one, and I'll tell you how I'll manage it. I'm out at three or four o'clock very often to fish with the incoming tide, and off Long Bar is a bang-up place to catch scup. I'll go up there in the morning before light for that purpose, and passing through the reeds I'll pull the stakes up. If I'm seen up there by any one he won't think

anything about it, while if one of you Institute fellows was off there 'twould give the whole thing away."

"Very well, and you shall lose nothing by doing that work, or for coming up here to-night to tell me of this matter. But how shall I know sure that you have succeeded in getting the sticks out of the way? It won't do to run any risk, you know."

"Of course not," answered Ben promptly; "and we'll fix that. I will be sitting on the bank a few rods below the passage, and if I take off my hat and swing it when I cheer you on, you can know it is all right for you to go through. But if I swing only my hand you can know I have failed. Please don't say anything about paying me, however, for my coming up here or doing the other work, for I'd do ten times as much any time to help you out," and the look he gave his companion showed that his heart was in his words.

Wallace understood the boy, and with a hearty shake of the hands, and many profuse thanks for the kindness shown him, he accompanied him to the outer gate of the institution grounds, where they parted.

The next day proved to be bright and clear —all that could be asked for in the matter of

weather. A large crowd had collected at the starting place when the appointed hour came, and as the shells reached their positions, wild cheers rang on the air.

Their places were decided by lot, the High School crew getting the inside, that is the right berth, and thus having the advantage so far as position could give it.

The signal to start was a pistol shot, and as the sharp report rang out like so many flashes of light, the oars dipped, and away sped the boats on the three mile race.

Cheer after cheer came from the spectators as the rivals shot up the stream neck to neck.

"Well mated!" cried one of the crowd.

"The M. V. I.'s are gaining!" shouted another.

"Hurrah for the M. H. S. crew!" hallooed a third.

"Rah! Rah! Rah!" sang out the cheers of the Institute boys.

So the exclamations went the rounds, while the rowers bent every energy to their task. They were for a time well matched, but the first bend of the river sent the M. V. I. shell a half length ahead, and the channel through the reeds was now at hand.

Wallace's quick eye scanned the right bank

of the stream. True to his promise Cripple Ben is seated on the summit just opposite, and now he takes off his hat and swings it high above his head. "Hurrah! for the M. V. I.'s!" he cries, and then his hat swings more frantically than ever.

"The passage is clear," Harry says in low but distinct tones to his crew; then he gives the command:—"On, boys, on!" and with bent backs and steady stroke the shell shoots among the reeds.

From his position in the boat Wallace sees, both by the looks and by a certain hesitancy on the part of his rivals, that they are expecting each moment to see his shell crash upon a hidden stake; but in this, thanks to Cripple Ben's faithful work early that morning (though they of course knew nothing of that), they are disappointed.

Amid prolonged cheers from the spectators, the Institute boat re-appears a moment later from the rank growth, and shoots into the main channel a full length ahead of the other.

Then the race becomes thrilling. Never had the Melrose, the scene of many a trial of oars, witnessed the equal of that day's work.

From the reedy channel to Long Bar there was no perceptible change in the relative posi-

tion of the racers. The M. V. I.'s held all they had gained at the marsh, but not a single inch did they add to it. Yet all they had really to do was to maintain that to the end.

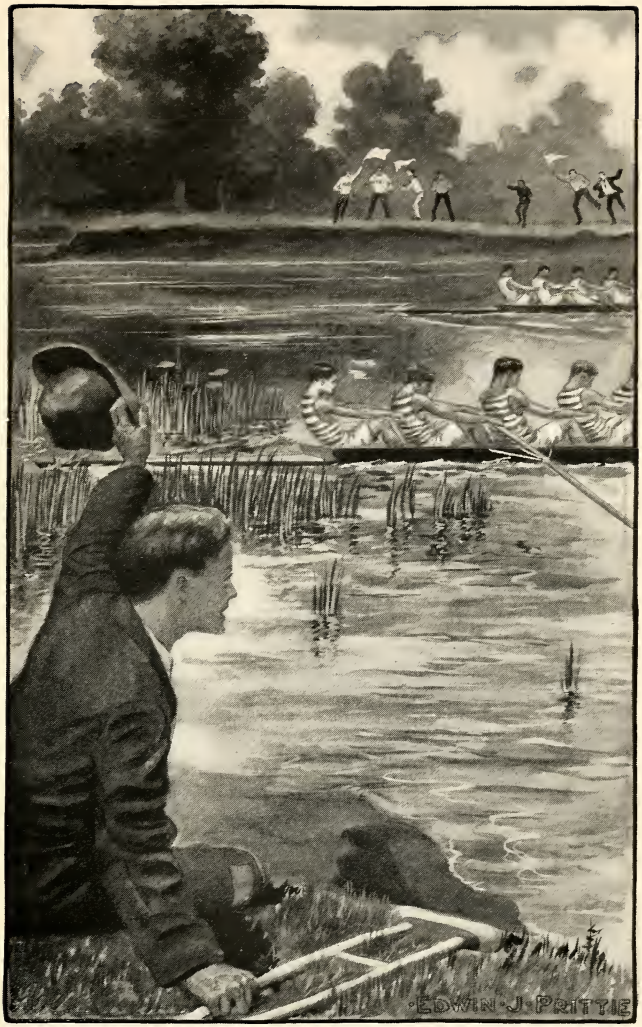
At this stirring moment the Bar was reached, and around its island end the greatest curve of the course must be made. Here was the opportunity for the M. H. S. crew to regain their lost ground, and as though they realized it they leaped on with a tremendous spurt.

The next instant a warning cry came from the knot of eye witnesses on the adjacent bank, and Wallace scarcely needed to look over his shoulder to be told what it meant. A single shell was shooting around the bend, and came directly into the course of the M. V. I. shell.

It contained but one occupant—Jack Howard. As if anticipating the inevitable collision, he seemingly strove energetically to sheer off, though in reality getting more and more in the way.

The supreme moment of the race had come, and it was well for Harry that he was prepared for it. A quick turn of his foot upon the rudder brakes headed his shell directly for the lighter craft, and loud and clear rang out his command to his comrades:

"Now boys, together, pull!"



"Hurrah, the passage is clear."

His crew prepared for the emergency, also responded with a precision as perfect as though but one man, and under all the strength of their united arms the boat bounded straight across the track to strike the intruder upon her starboard quarter.

CHAPTER V

CRIPPLE BEN'S INVITATION

SO GREAT was the shock to the lighter craft, that it was tossed to one side with a force that pitched Howard head foremost into the river, while the shell, amid a storm of cheers from the students on the bank, regained its proper course.

The maneuvre, well as it was executed, cost the M. V. I. crew dear, however, for their captain's oar as he swept by the overturned boat fouled with it, and snapped it in two.

"We are lost!" cried Tom Sexsmith, as he saw the other shell now shoot alongside of them.

"No we are not!" rang out Harry Wallace's voice. "Pull, men, pull! we shall beat them yet!"

Before the words had left his mouth, he had dropped the handle of his broken oar, and caught the blade; and now he began to paddle vigorously with it, keeping time to his comrade's strokes.

Inspired by his act, his crew bent to their work with new energy, and down the last half

mile of the course the two boats dashed again, bow to bow.

When within a quarter of a mile of the stake they were still side by side, and Harry, growing desperate, cried out:

"This will never do, boys! Push her ahead; we mustn't lose our camping trip!" and then he redoubled his own efforts.

His companions with a shout responded to his call, and slowly their shell drew away from the other. Soon it was a full length in advance, and no efforts of their opponents could reduce that distance.

Then amid the "rah-rahs" of the Institute boys, who had followed along the bank to the finish, it crossed the line, and two sharp cracks of a pistol declared it victor.

"I wonder how Jack Howard got out of his scrape? With nothing worse than a ducking, I hope," remarked Wallace, as he and his crew shipped their oars, and wiped the perspiration from their foreheads.

"You seem to have a faculty for throwing him into the river," replied Rob Hunt with a laugh; "but he is all right. There he is down on the island end of Long Bar, waiting for some one to come and take him off."

"That was a mean trick," cried Reed Jones

savagely, for his boat had floated near enough to the other for him to overhear this conversation.

"Well, perhaps so," answered Wallace calmly, looking the speaker straight in the eyes; "but it isn't so contemptible as putting sunken stakes in the marshy passage, or getting in the course of the shells on purpose."

"What's that?" asked one of the judges, whose quick ear had caught the drift of these words. "Do you mean to say Howard got in your track purposely?"

"Oh! I've nothing to complain of," replied Harry with a laugh. "Reed here can make any explanation he chooses."

But evidently Jones had no explanation to offer, for without a word he motioned his crew to dip their oars, and pull for their boat-house.

The judges now called Harry alongside and requested him to tell them what he had meant, but with the simple remark that he had known of and been on the look-out for Jack Howard's appearance off the Bar, he gave the word for his crew to pull in shore.

Here he and his comrades were received by Dr. Randall, Mr. Wallace, and a host of other friends, all of whom extended their heartiest congratulations on the victory achieved, and

then the whole body of students formed themselves into an escort, and led the victors up the hill to the Institute.

Here to their surprise they were informed that a banquet had been arranged for them, and they hastened to their rooms to dress for it.

An hour or two later they were conducted into the large dining-hall, which was trimmed with flowers and draped with flags for the feast; and conspicuous among the banners were two, one at the upper and one at the lower end of the table where the victorious crew were seated, made of crimson silk. On one, wrought in gold, were two shells with their crews bent to the oars, and underneath the letters: "M. V. I. vs. M. H. S." On the other was a pair of golden oars crossed, and between the upright blades the word, "Victory," while between the spreading handles was the date of the race.

When the supper was over Mr. Wallace arose, and in behalf of the many friends of the Institute presented these banners to the victorious crew, and through them to the seat of learning itself, to be sacredly preserved as souvenirs of the memorable victory.

"My, if we could only carry them along with us to the camp," whispered Tom Sexsmith to

Harry, who sat beside him, "wouldn't they look fine floating above the tent?"

Low as his whisper was it was heard by Dr. Randall opposite, who after a hurried conversation with Mr. Wallace in suppressed tones, arose to respond to that gentleman's presentation speech.

In behalf of the crew and the Institute he accepted the beautiful gift with thanks, concluding:

"I am informed that the boat-club through the liberality of a gentleman present here tonight is to spend a few days of their coming vacation in camping out, and am instructed by the donors of the banners to say that the lads have fairly won the right to carry the emblems of their victory with them on their trip. We only stipulate that they shall return them to the Institute in the fall, not merely so far as possible unsullied by the stains of the weather, but, what is far more important, unstained by a single ignoble deed in the camp over which they are to wave."

"Hurrah!" cried the irrepressible Tom, and his cheer was caught up and carried around the hall with wild enthusiasm.

"Come around to my room on Monday at recreation hours and we'll talk up our trip,"

Harry said to his companions as they parted for the night.

True to the appointment the lads appeared, and all were soon busy discussing the place where they should go.

"As we are to be Harry's guests, I move he choose the place," said Frank Reynolds, a quiet and thoroughly sensible lad of seventeen.

"I second that motion, but I do hope it will be somewhere among the lakes of Maine," added Ed Willis, another of the crew.

"There's lots more fun to be found farther up, and we'll be less likely to be disturbed by other campers," remarked Fred Williams.

"Where do you mean, Fred?" asked several.

"I had a friend who was up in Nova Scotia last Summer," he explained, "but I don't just remember the locality. I know however you could get there in a sail-boat, and there were lakes, and gunning and fishing enough to suit any of us. I'll find out where it was, and let you know before the examinations are over."

"I call for the motion," interrupted Rob Hunt, "Harry is the one to decide, and I'm willing to leave it all to him."

"So say we all of us," joined in Tom Sexsmith, turning a somersault in front of Harry, and then bowing low before him.

"I'm ready to leave the place to the rest of you," said Harry, speaking himself for the first time, "but before you decide that, I'd like to make a proposition on which that may somewhat depend, but I hope you'll fall in with it all the same."

"Of course we will, fire away," promptly responded all.

"Well," continued their captain with some show of hesitancy, as though he, notwithstanding their assurances, feared his suggestion might not be welcomed by them; "you all know to whom we largely owe our victory, and so indirectly this trip—"

"Cripple Ben," they all answered.

"What do you say then to our inviting him to go along with us, and making it the jolliest Summer he ever saw?" and Harry gazed anxiously at his comrades.

"Hurrah!"

"Good for you, Harry!"

"We'll do it!"

These were the exclamations which to his delight now greeted him.

"Then wherever we go," he continued, "we shall want to choose a place where he can readily go with us."

"Of course," they assented.

"Let us leave the place then until Harry has seen Ben, and found out whether he will go," suggested Tom Sexsmith who, notwithstanding his drollery, was as thoughtful a boy as there was in the crew.

This suggestion was unanimously accepted by the club, and a formal vote was passed instructing Harry as their representative to carry the invitation to the lame lad.

The following evening therefore he obtained a leave of absence from the school, and went down to the little cabin at Old Field Point. He found Ben and his mother sitting just without the door and after talking with them a few minutes about the race, made known his special errand down there.

Ben's eyes danced with delight, as the invitation was given him, and he looked first at Harry, then at his mother, hardly knowing what to say.

"I'm afraid Ben couldn't stand camping out," said Mrs. Probert apprehensively, still secretly pleased at the invitation so cordially given her boy.

"Oh! I could stand that well enough," put in Ben. "I wouldn't have any rougher time than I sometimes do on the river; but I'm afraid," —he was on the point of saying he was not a fit companion for the others, but with Harry's eyes

full upon him he changed it to—"I should make you fellows lots of trouble."

"If you had seen the boys and heard their hearty expressions when they voted for this invitation to be given you, you wouldn't think of that," replied Harry, reproachfully; then he went on to explain that they were not going anywhere Ben could not go, and the tent they were going to use was waterproof. "Of course," he added, "some of our hunting excursions will be too much for you, but there will be fishing and hunting near camp that you can engage in, and the change will do you good."

Noticing Ben still hesitating, he shrewdly divined the cause, and continued with a marked delicacy of feeling: "You understand we all go on this trip on exactly the same terms; father pays the bills. When he heard of the favor you had rendered he specified that you just as much as the rest of us were to be included among those who were to go; and every one of the boys, without knowing father had done this, enthusiastically voted to have you accompany us."

"Where will you go?" asked Mrs. Probert, growing more favorable to the plan.

"We have not decided fully, but very likely somewhere up in Maine or Nova Scotia," answered Wallace.

"Wasn't it the latter place you went with your father once, Ben?" inquired Mrs. Probert.

"Yes," he replied, and then in explanation to Harry's inquiring look he went on:

"It was the voyage before the one on which father was lost. I had gone with him up to the banks, and during the trip he had some business that called him into Annapolis, Nova Scotia. We left the smack there, and went on up the river a long distance till we came to a branch that took us off into the South Mountains."

"After going up that stream twenty miles or more, we came to some falls, where we camped. Above the falls was a beautiful lake full of islands, and such fishing as was there I never saw before."

Mrs. Probert at this point arose and entered the house for some purpose, but Ben as though there had been no interruption kept on with his story:

"Why I caught trout there that weighed four and five pounds apiece, and as for bass and perch and pike there was no end to them. Father was off in the woods gunning most of the time, and I remember he shot a bear, and a deer, besides lots of smaller game. I tell you

if you could go to such a place as that it would be worth something."

"Why can't we?" asked Harry, catching something of Ben's own enthusiasm. "Couldn't you lead us there?"

"Yes, only get me to Annapolis and I'll agree to put you right alongside of that lake," responded Ben; then musingly: "I've often wondered what father's business was up there. He took no one with him but me, and seemed awful disappointed about something when he came away. Perhaps mother could tell."

Harry rose now to go, for he had at his coming been given a chair beside Ben.

"Well, you'll go then, Ben, and if the boys should so decide will show us to the place you speak of?"

"I think so," he replied looking inquiringly at his mother who now reappeared at the door. "You might now shut up the house, and make that visit up to Northtown you have wanted to for so long," he went on speaking to her. "That change would do you as much good as this excursion will me."

Mrs. Probert finding his heart was set upon the trip, finally gave her consent, and with a promise to let Ben know the full arrangements

as soon as they were completed, Harry bade him good-night, and hurried away.

As he turned the corner of the house Ben called out:

"If the fellows wish I'll come up and tell them more about that place in Nova Scotia."

"All right," answered Wallace, pausing an instant to catch the boy's words and to make his response.

Brief as the stop was it prevented him from catching sight of a lad, who just then sprang to his feet around the corner, where he had been listening to the prolonged conversation with Ben, and scurried off through the darkness towards the village.

CHAPTER VI

FURTHER PLOTTING

THE fleeing boy kept on the run until he had reached the main street; then he dropped down to a rapid walk, still proceeding, however, toward the centre of the town.

When nearly opposite the post-office a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder from behind, and a voice said:

"Say, Jack, what's your hurry?"

"This is luck," the lad addressed immediately answered, and came to a standstill; "I was going to look you up, Reed."

"And I was already looking for you. I've made a discovery," his friend responded.

"It can't be a bigger one than I've made; but out with it."

"Not here," replied the first speaker in low tones; "come around to father's office. He's out, but I've got a key, and we can go in there and talk without being overheard."

"Growing cautious, hey, Reed? it's a pity we hadn't been more so that afternoon down by the

river. There's where we gave ourselves away."

"To Cripple Ben!" a flood of light breaking in upon him.

"Yes; I've found that out and more too," replied Jack, almost in a whisper; "but let's get around to the office."

This conversation had not consumed more than two minutes, and the two friends turned an adjacent corner just before Harry Wallace on his way to the Institute passed by.

Entering the main door of a large block, they ascended the stairs to the second floor. At the door of a room which bore the placard—

"HENRY JONES,

"Attorney and Counselor-at-Law,"

they paused, and Reed producing a key unlocked it, and they entered.

Securing the door after them, they lighted a lamp, pulled down the window shades, and then seated themselves on chairs at opposite sides of the office desk.

"You remember," began Reed, "how I told you that I heard Harry Wallace urge his crew on to that last spurt which gave them the vic-

tory Saturday by saying, 'We mustn't lose our trip, boys!' "

"Yes," his comrade assented.

"Well, I ran in with Peter Haskill tonight. We've always been pretty good friends, if he is an M. V. I., and I pumped him about the banquet they had up there at the institution Saturday evening. He got warmed up as he described the affair, and soon gave me the points I was after without a single leading question from me."

"I guess you and I are running on the same track, after all," put in Jack at this moment.

"You'll soon know," answered Reed, and continuing his story:

"It seems Wallace's father is to pay all the bills of the boat-club to camp out this Summer, and they are going off somewhere up north as soon as the school-term is over. A pair of silk banners commemorating their victory over us has been given them, and they intend to carry them along and fly them from the tent in great style. On their return the flags are to be put in the Institute library as souvenirs of the race."

"And what do you propose to do?" asked Jack curiously, knowing by his companion's ap-

pearance some plan was already forming in his mind.

"Find out where they are going, and get those banners," Reed replied in some bitterness. "I don't propose to have them stuck up there at the Institute for every new class to crow over."

"Then you've got some distance to go," remarked Jack with emphasis; "for I've not only found out all you have, except about those banners, but a great deal more. Listen!"

And he then told his comrade in detail the conversation he had overheard down at Cripple Ben's.

"That will help us some," remarked Reed complacently when Jack had finished; "all we want to know now is the place they finally decide upon for their camp, and we can follow them and put a spice into their camp-life they do not look for. But how came you down to Old Field Point to-night?"

"I went there on purpose," Jack answered. "You see the moment I saw Wallace's boat head for me Saturday, I not only knew I was fated for another ducking at his hands, but suspected that he had in some way found out our plans. When Dick Travers came over to take me off the Bar, therefore, I got him to drop down through

the reedy passage, and, finding the stakes were gone, I was then sure of it.

"That night I ran in with the janitor of the Institute, and found out from him that Cripple Ben was up there to see Wallace Friday night, and so caught on directly. I have kept my eyes open ever since, and when Harry went down to the Point this evening I was right behind him; and creeping up to the corner of the shanty I heard their whole talk, and liked to have got caught in the bargain," and he laughed heartily at the thought.

"How was that?" asked Reed sharply.

"Why," explained Jack, "I was so anxious to catch their last words I stayed a little too long, and Wallace almost turned the corner upon me. But Ben did me a good turn by stopping him a moment with another remark, and I dug out the best I knew."

"You are sure he didn't see you?" asked Jones anxiously.

"Dead sure," replied Howard.

"Well, we must now meet the other boys, and make our preparations so as to be off as soon as the other crew; a little sooner would be better yet."

"Do you think they will go?" asked Jack with a marked glow of interest.

"You can count on them all but Charlie Ashaway," was the reply. "He was wrathy enough when he found out the tricks we tried to play on the other crew. You see we had kept it from him until Harry Wallace threw it in our faces after the race, and then he declared he'd have nothing more to do with us. We will book you in his place, and that will make us even six."

"I'd like to go well enough, but where are the rocks to come from?" asked Howard gloomily. "I'm dead broke, and there is no use asking father for it."

"I've taken the expense into account," answered Reed promptly. "Bill Dunster has a tent large enough for our use, and as for guns and rods we are all pretty well supplied with those, so the only cost to us will be fares and provisions. Of course, if we have to go up to Nova Scotia it will come to a good stiff figure, but by lumping our funds we can, I guess, make out enough for the trip, though we sha'n't be able to go in the shape the other fellows will. I can rake out enough for you, Jack, and the other boys needn't know but what you have chipped in your part."

"You can count on me sure, then," said Howard, regaining his usual spirits; as long as

his expenses were paid and he could go, he didn't care where the money came from.

After a little further conversation the two plotters separated; one to see and talk over his new plan with four of his crew, the other to keep watch of Cripple Ben and Harry Wallace, and ascertain if possible the exact locality where they would make their camp.

A week later the six cronies were together in the same office. Howard was able to report the very stream among the South Mountains in Nova Scotia where the other crew had decided to go; and having now in their possession the only information lacking to complete their arrangements, Reed and his gang were soon in readiness to slip off the moment any action on the part of their rivals warranted such a move.

CHAPTER VII

CAUGHT IN A GALE

IN THE meantime, utterly unaware of the plans of the High School Boat-Club, the M. V. I. crew pushed rapidly forward the preparations for their own departure. At their request, Cripple Ben again visited the Institute, and his glowing description of the lake in Nova Scotia that he had previously visited led them to vote unanimously for that place as their camping ground.

Mr. Wallace was immediately notified of their decision, and he forwarded by steamer to Halifax and thence by rail to Annapolis, in readiness for their arrival, all the supplies and camping paraphernalia they would be likely to need during their outing.

The lads themselves, after studying the various routes by which they could reach their destination, decided to travel the whole distance by water, and on the close of the school-term hurried off to their homes for brief visits before meeting in Boston for their voyage.

Harry took Cripple Ben home with himself, and the attention he showed on the halt boy, both on the cars and while at his father's house, strengthened, if that were possible, the warm attachment already existing between them.

On the following Monday, the day set for their start, they left Worcester together for the capital, and joining the other boys at the United States Hotel went with them down to India Wharf, where they embarked upon the steamer *Forest City* for Portland.

Once upon the deck of the vessel, they unfurled their silk banners, which Harry had thus far had in his own keeping, and with them fluttering in the stiff breeze sailed down the beautiful harbor to the broad ocean.

Their animated faces, sprightly conversation and handsome flags soon attracted the attention of the other passengers; and when it was once known who the lads were and where they were going, they became the chief centre of interest to all on board.

One old gentleman became particularly attached to Cripple Ben, and on learning his name was Probert, asked if he was any relation of John Probert, captain of the smack *Swan*, which had been wrecked a few years before.

With an emotion he could not entirely suppress, Ben replied:

"He was my father."

"Indeed," cried the old man with evident pleasure; "I knew him well. My name is Brown, and I'm in the fish trade; have several vessels that ply back and forth to the banks, and one time your father did me a good turn. One of my smacks had a sick crew; there weren't enough well men to handle her, and he towed her into the nearest port without charging a cent. Said he didn't know when he might be in the same fix, and would need similar help. Poor fellow! he was lost soon after; he was a gentleman, every inch of him."

Ben's cheeks flushed with pride as the man spoke in these hearty terms of his father, and he felt as though he could now claim, in spite of his deformity and poverty, social position among his comrades. The circumstance did more to put him at his ease with his associates than any show of good-will or kindness on their part had done.

Mr. Brown now became quite talkative, and was soon in full possession of the boat-crew's history and the trip they contemplated; at length turning to Harry, whom he had learned was the leader of the party, he inquired:

"May I ask your route to Annapolis?"

"On arriving in Portland to-morrow, we expect to take the steamer *City of Richmond*, of the Portland, Mt. Desert and Machias line, to Machiasport, where we hope to charter a sailing-vessel to set us over to Annapolis," Harry politely answered.

"How fortunate!" said the gentleman, rubbing his hands together. "I belong at Grand Pré upon Minas Basin, at the head of the Bay of Fundy, and have one of my vessels at Machiasport waiting to take me home. What is there to prevent your sailing with me? We'll run in through Digby Gut, and leave you at Annapolis."

This invitation was extended with a heartiness the lads could not well refuse, and gratefully accepting it therefore, they continued their journey to Machiasport in Mr. Brown's company, arriving early Wednesday afternoon.

His smack, the *Gamble*, a schooner of about ninety tons, lay at the dock only a few rods from the steamboat landing, and he and his boy guests were soon on board; then the moorings were cast off and she put to sea.

Under a gentle breeze from the southwest she went slowly along the New Brunswick coast and at sunset was off Grand Manan Island.

Here, with the going down of the sun, the wind died away, and the vessel, with her sails hanging idly at her mast, scarcely moved over the surface of the bay.

"This is a calm in dead earnest," Harry remarked, as he and his friends came on deck after supper.

"But I rather like it," said Tom Sexsmith. "Just see the shadow of the smack in the water here," and he pointed over the rail.

"Or of the island off there," chimed in Rob Hunt, pointing to the north.

"It's awful hot, though," exclaimed Fred Williams, wiping the sweat off of his brow with his handkerchief.

Mr. Brown and the captain now came on deck.

"This don't look as though we shall get across the bay to-night," Harry remarked to them as they drew near him.

"We shall be getting out of this faster than you want to before long, youngster," answered the officer gruffly.

"Why?" questioned the lad in some surprise; for not a cloud was to be seen, the sky was fast filling up with bright constellations, and every star was mirrored in the vast deep beneath.

It was Mr. Brown who replied:

"The barometer has suddenly fallen several degrees, an alarming indication that a gale is at hand.

As for the captain, he had walked quickly to the helm and taken it with his own hands.

"All hands ahoy!" he cried; "take in all sail!"

Instantly all was activity on board. The hoarse orders of the officers, the answers of the sailors, the creaking of the blocks—these spoke of the imminent danger at hand, and that brave men were doing all that could be done to prepare for it.

Before these preparations were complete, however, the sky became overcast and thick darkness closed around.

"Hold fast your lines! Every man to his post!" commanded the captain in sharp, quick tones. "There is no knowing from what quarter the wind will strike us."

Scarcely had he spoken when the whole sky was pierced by a terrible flash of lightning; then followed a loud and long roar of thunder.

"I don't like this thing," said the mate to the captain, rubbing his eyes to get rid of the effects of that dazzling gleam.

"Nor do I," admitted the captain; then to his passengers he said: "You had better go

below; we may have to put on the hatches as soon as the wind strikes us."

Mr. Brown, who, though the owner of a number of vessels, was not much of a sailor, and four of the boys, immediately obeyed this suggestion; but Harry, Tom Sexsmith and Cripple Ben tarried a little longer.

"This makes me think of old times when with father," Ben said to his companions. "Ah! if I only had sound legs under me I too would be a sailor."

His comrades made no reply; they understood his feelings, however, for even to them there was a fascination in the approaching storm.

"Helm hard aport!" thundered the captain at this moment. "Quick, now!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the answer.

The creaking of the rudder to port followed, and the schooner slowly answered to her helm. Then came another blinding flash, a sharper peal of thunder, and a great gust struck the vessel that almost threw her on her beam.

"If that's only a feeler, there'll be business for us when the storm settles down in earnest," remarked the captain, as he called two men to the helm and directed them to lash themselves there.

The second blast of the gale was not long in

coming. It struck the vessel with still more violence than the preceding one. All were in momentary expectation of hearing the snapping of the masts or the giving away of the sails; but the smack bore it well, and rushed off through the water like a race-horse.

"We are heading directly for the east coast," said the captain, "and if the gale continues long at this rate, nothing can keep us off of the Digby Neck reefs."

He now noticed the three lads standing in the shelter of the cabin, and, with something like admiration for their pluck, added:

"Up here yet, boys? It's no place for you, however; then, too, we want to lash down the hatches. Soon the billows will be sweeping the deck."

Thinking of Ben rather than of themselves, Harry and Tom helped their companion down into the cabin, and the covers were fastened in place.

None too soon, moreover, for a heavy wave a moment later buried the vessel; before she could recover, another billow struck her at a disadvantage, but fortunately her helm was down, and answering it promptly she was brought out of imminent danger.

In this way an hour passed. But little

change was noticeable; the gale scarcely abated; the laboring and straining of the vessel were terrible; to the unpractised ears of the lads it seemed as though she might at any moment gape apart and go down.

"If we get out of this alive it will be a night—" Harry had remarked; then his words were cut short by a terrible lurch of the schooner, followed by a loud cry from the deck.

The next instant the hatch was thrown open, and the mate's voice called out:

"The captain has been washed overboard, and breakers are just ahead of us! You had better come on deck."

With pale faces Mr. Brown and the lads hurried up the ladder, Harry helping Ben before he went himself.

In the darkness little could be seen, but the sound of breakers rose even above the noise of the gale.

"Do you know where you are?" asked Mr. Brown of the mate.

"I heard the captain say before he was washed overboard that we were driving for Digby Neck reef," he replied; "but I am not acquainted with the shore. Does any one know the coast?"

The last question was asked in tones that could be heard all over the deck.

For a minute no one answered. Every individual on board knew the situation was almost hopeless, and all shrank from assuming any responsibility in such a dire extremity.

It was a time of fearful suspense. They were being driven forward with frightful rapidity, every moment bearing them nearer destruction.

"What light is that to the northeast?" suddenly asked Mr. Brown.

"It must be the one at the entrance of Digby Gut," cried the mate. "Again I ask, don't some of you men know this coast?"

Then a voice rang clear above the roar of the storm and seething billows:

"If that is Digby Light, I do; take me to the wheel and hold me on my feet, and I will put the craft into the harbor."

It was Cripple Ben who had spoken.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAUNCH FIRE-FLY

BEN'S astonishing declaration seemed to both Mr. Brown and the mate to be little more than an idle boast; but not so to Harry Wallace. He knew his young friend was not only perfectly familiar with the handling of a vessel, but had also sailed in those waters before, and he put implicit confidence in his unexpected and seemingly wild assertion.

"Here, Tom," he cried, "let us help Ben over to the wheel. You know he's been here before, and can steer a boat like a sailor."

His words electrified the despairing seamen and well nigh hopeless lads, and they cheered Tom Sexsmith as he promptly sprang forward to answer Harry's call. The next instant the crippled youth was at the helm, held upon his feet not only by his two boy friends, but also by the two sailors, who, without the slightest hesitation, had surrendered the wheel to his hands.

There is no doubt that the violence of the gale had now somewhat diminished, but the wind

was still strong and the sea turbulent, and it was well for Ben that he brought to his self-assigned task muscles that had become like iron from constant rowing, and a courage and a will power that knew no yielding.

Grasping firmly the spokes of the rudder wheel, he listened a moment for the sound of the breakers so alarmingly near. The schooner was running in a northeasterly direction, and the noise of the dashing waters was directly ahead.

A vigorous turn of the wheel let the schooner drop off a point or two, and as she, with a tremor that shook her from bow to stern, settled to her new course, it was apparent to every listener that the breakers had, by that movement, been brought upon the left hand, and the vessel was at last running parallel with and not into them.

A sudden conviction that the lad knew what he was about now seized the mate, who had thus far stood passively at the cabin door, and stepping quickly along to the wheel he said:

"You are in command, youngster; give your orders and they shall be obeyed."

"I'll tell you what I'm up to," replied Ben frankly, but still attending closely to his helm; "there are two reefs in here. The outer one

lies north of, and at the east end overlaps, the second. Between them is a deep channel that in favorable weather is sometimes used by vessels to save the longer course around the reefs. I've been through there once, and am going to try to make the passage now. It's risky in this storm, I know, but it's our only chance, and is worth taking."

"I see," responded the officer heartily; "and you want a sharp lookout kept forward."

"Yes," assented Ben; "and have your men stand ready to hoist the main jib when we reach the channel; it will steady the schooner, and give her better headway as we run down it."

With a smothered exclamation of surprise the mate repeated these orders to the sailors.

Swiftly the smack sped along her course, until the young pilot's quick ear detected the sound of breakers on the right as well as the left hand.

"We are close to the channel," he said hastily to the officer at his side; "quick with your orders."

"Hoist the main jib! Keep a sharp look-out forward!" were the immediate commands.

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the men, springing to the ropes.

"Breakers!" called the lookout, as the jib was hauled to its place.

"Where away?" asked Ben himself, eagerly.

"On the right and not ten fathoms off!" was the startling reply.

A vivid flash of lightning at this instant gave the lad his bearings. The west end of the second reef of ledges was close at hand on the starboard quarter, while the east end of the first reef tapered away on the port, and the schooner was making for a narrow but open passage between them. Straight ahead faintly but steadily gleamed the lamp in the lighthouse at the entrance into Digby Gut, and with a grip on the wheel that held the tossing vessel to her place Ben ran directly for it.

There was fortunately a lull in the gale at that moment, and under the impetus of her swelling jib the noble craft sped down the centre of the channel. A slight deviation to either the right or the left would have sent her to instant destruction.

Not a word was spoken by any one. Ben's eyes were strained forward to penetrate, if possible, the thick gloom; his ears had not less tension to catch the faintest sound.

"Breakers right ahead!" suddenly shouted the man forward, in great alarm; but the young

pilot was on the alert, and had detected the sound as soon as he, and a quick turn of the wheel was his only answer.

Then a flash of lightning revealed that the vessel, just clearing a huge projection of rocks on the starboard, and over which the waves were dashing in fury, had emerged into the comparatively smooth waters at the mouth of Digby Gut.

The perilous passage was safely made.

Not, however, until the schooner had been brought under the lee side of one of the projecting headlands, and securely anchored, did Ben leave his post; then, quite exhausted by the severe strain, he was assisted into the cabin, where Mr. Brown's own hands ministered to him, until his wet clothes were changed for dry, and he was snugly stowed into his berth.

"It's a bold move you have made to-night, my boy," remarked Mr. Brown with considerable emotion as he spread a light blanket over the lad; "we shall not soon forget that your cool head and strong arm have not only saved the vessel, but, in all probability, our lives."

"That's so," assented Harry Wallace and his five comrades in a chorus; for they were all in the cabin changing their wet garments and preparing for a much-needed rest.

"Something had to be done to save the smack and us; and, as I knew about the reefs, I was the one to undertake it. It wasn't anything more than the rest of you would have tried had you been acquainted here," replied Ben, modestly.

What Mr. Brown would have answered it is impossible to say, for, before he could utter a word, the hatch was thrown back, and the mate and one of the sailors descended, bearing between them an unconscious form.

"Why, who's this? What's happened?" asked Mr. Brown in consternation; then catching sight of the unfortunate man's face he answered his own question in the words: "If I live, it's the captain!"

"Yes," replied the mate, and nodding for his companion to lower the body of the officer down upon the cabin floor; "you see, he wasn't washed overboard, after all. The wave that swept him off his feet drove him head first into the caboose, and left him stunned on the floor until the cook went in to light the fire and found him."

"He isn't dead, then?" exclaimed Mr. Brown, joyfully.

"No, only unconscious from the blow on the head; we'll soon bring him to," responded the

mate, kneeling down to chafe the captain's wrists and temples.

Mr. Brown came to his assistance; such simple restoratives as the vessel afforded were used, and after a time the man slowly returned to consciousness.

His first words were an inquiry for the condition of the smack, and when told she was safely anchored under the headlands of Digby Gut he seemed satisfied, and soon sank into a quiet and refreshing sleep.

The next morning, however, he was quite himself, and after breakfast directed the getting of the schooner under way, and the bringing of her up to the dock at Annapolis.

He was enthusiastic over Cripple Ben's daring and successful attempt to run between the outside reefs in the darkness and storm of the night before.

"I had thought of the same thing," he said; "but when I was swept off of my feet I concluded 'twas all up with the smack, for I knew Johnson (the mate) wasn't acquainted in here. How came you to know 'bout the passage, youngster?"

"I was up here a few years ago with my father, John Probert, and ran through there," Ben explained, wishing the captain and his

other friends would let the whole matter drop, for they had all had so much to say about his act that he was becoming tired of hearing of it.

"John Probert your father!" cried the captain. "Why, I might have known it; you are just his picture, and have some of the same grit in ye, too. What a pity you haven't a pair of sound legs under ye; you'd be in charge of a smack in no time."

Evidently to the captain this was the height of all human ambition.

"I say, Ben, would you like to go up town with the rest of us?" Harry Wallace called out at this moment. "We are going up to Boland & Wilder's, to whose care father sent our traps. It's not far, I think, and perhaps you'll enjoy the walk."

"I'll go," answered Ben, picking up his crutches, for he was glad of the oportunity to get away from the well-meaning but talkative officer.

They had barely reached the wharf when Mr. Brown came up out of the cabin of the smack and stopped them.

"Why not let Ben go with me to charter a boat to take you up to the lakes?" he asked; "we will have it around here by the time you

can send down your stuff, and after an early dinner you can start up the river."

Stopping a moment to give Mr. Brown some idea of the kind of boat he had expected to secure for the trip, and the price he was willing to pay for its use, Harry went off up the street with the other boys, while Mr. Brown and Ben walked down the docks toward a place where a huge sign informed them boats were kept to let.

Wallace and his companions found the store of Boland & Wilder without difficulty, and were cordially received by the junior member of the firm.

"Our own truckman will load up your goods and convey them to the wharf," he said; "meantime let me show you about our town."

The boys accepted his invitation, and soon became so interested in the chief attractions of the thriving village that before they were aware it was already noon. Thanking the gentleman, therefore, for his courtesy, and settling with him for the freight and storage of their camping outfit, they hurriedly returned to the smack.

Once at her dock, they stood still in sheer surprise at what they saw. Below the schooner was a small steam launch, on which their goods were already loaded. She had a small yawl in

tow, and also a light flat-bottomed sharpie; her engine fires were going, steam was up, and everything was in readiness for an immediate ascent of the river. Last of all, Cripple Ben sat in her stern, with his hand on her tiller, as though the moment his comrades stepped on board their journey would begin.

"Is that *our* craft?" asked Harry, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise.

"Yes," replied Ben, with sparkling eyes; "don't you like her?"

"Like her? Of course I do!" cried Harry emphatically; "where'd you find her?"

"Down the wharves a piece," answered Ben. "You see, she burns coal and wood, and we've got enough of the former in her bunker to take us up to the lakes and back, and if we've an occasion to use her up there we can burn wood. Mr. Brown thought her better and surer against the currents than a sail-boat, so he made arrangements for her."

"That's all right," replied Harry slowly, but wondering what she was going to cost for the trip; finally he asked: "What do they charge for her?"

Ben evidently was waiting for this question, for with a broad grin he responded, "Nothing."

"Nothing!" exclaimed all the boys in amazement.

"That's about the size of it," replied Ben coolly, and enjoying his comrades' puzzled looks.

Mr. Brown, who had been standing on the deck of the schooner, listening with considerable amusement to this conversation, now explained:

"She belongs to Ben, young gentlemen, a gift from the captain and myself, and he means she is at your free service during your coming trip."

A brief pause followed this astonishing announcement; then Tom Sexsmith asked:

"What's her name, Ben?"

"The *Fire-Fly*," he answered.

"Three cheers for the *Fire-Fly*, and her owner, and her givers!" he cried, taking off his hat and swinging it over his head.

They were given with a will.

"Now come on board of the smack and take dinner with us," Mr. Brown said; "after that you may be off as soon as you please."

The dinner occupied the better part of an hour, there was so much to talk about as well as to eat; but a little past one o'clock the *Fire-Fly* cast off her hawsers, whistled farewell to the smack and her crew, and with the boat-club

banners flying, one at her bow, the other at her stern, steamed swiftly off up the river. Singing school songs and chatting merrily they were looking forward to an ideal jolly camping trip and not one of them guessed at the dangers and adventures which were to befall them.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY

CRIPPLE BEN, happy at the thought that he, through the beneficence of Mr. Brown and the captain of the schooner, could contribute the use of the launch as his part towards the success of their expedition, sat at her helm; while Tom Sexsmith, by the general consent of his comrades, had established himself as her fireman and engineer. But the duties of neither lad were so exacting as to prevent him from sharing with the other boys the enjoyment of the beautiful and varied scenery of Annapolis Valley, through which they were now passing.

On either side, but some distance back from the banks of the river, rose the mountain spurs, from six to twelve hundred feet in height, their sides and tops covered with forests of birch or maple or oak, or stunted fir. Between the hills and the stream stretched broad, well-cultivated fields, with here and there a cluster of dwellings, in some instances scarcely reaching the dignity

of a hamlet, in others attending to a more pretentious and sometimes thriving village.

"This doesn't look much like good hunting and fishing grounds," remarked Fred Williams, as the *Fire-Fly* sped swiftly by the numerous habitations.

"Wait until we are thirty or forty miles up the river," replied Ben with a smile; "before we stop for the night you may have another opinion."

And so it proved. The farther they ascended, the nearer the mountains drew in towards the stream; villages dropped to solitary farm houses, and at length even these became ruder and less frequent, while heavy woods occasionally grew clear down to the water's edge.

The sun had set, and twilight was fast growing into darkness, when Ben, pointing up the right bank of the river, said:

"There is McPherson's Landing, boys, where we shall stop to-night. Just beyond it is the stream we shall take to reach the lakes; unless they've built further up its banks than they had when I was here before, this is the last house we shall see until we return to the river."

In a few minutes the launch had run alongside of a rude wharf in front of a dilapidated saw-mill. Back of this was a small collection

of log cabins, from the larger of which there immediately came a long, lank, heavily bearded backwoodsman, who sauntered down to the dock, calling out:

"Hello, thar, strangers!"

"Good evening," the boys responded in concert; then Harry Wallace asked:

"May we put up here to-night, sir?"

"I dunno nothin' to hender," the man replied. "Jake McPherson never yit turned a decent fellow from his door." Then eyeing the launch and her crew with evident curiosity he continued: "Going up to the lakes campin', I s'pose?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry politely.

"That's a cute boat ye've got thar; I never seed a purtier up this part of the river; but how'd ye 'spect to git her 'bove the falls?" he now inquired.

"We shall make our camp at the basin below the falls, but put our small boats into the lake to use there," Harry explained.

"Sho', now, so ye can," assented McPherson with a grin; "but fix up here for the night, an' come right 'long to the house; the ole wom'n'll give ye a bite an' stow ye in somewhar'."

As this would save them the trouble of unpacking and packing up their tents the boys ac-

cepted the invitation, and soon were ready to accompany their host to the house.

"Isn't there something in the way of provisions you'd like, Mr. McPherson?" Wallace asked, as he was about to leave the launch. Somehow he couldn't help thinking, from the looks of the landing and its surroundings, that it would be a difficult thing to find food enough there to feed himself and companions.

"I reckon not," replied Mr. McPherson; "I was down to the village not long ago, an' fetched up quite a lot of fodder. Then ye'll need what ye've got up at the lakes."

"You think we won't find much game there, then?" questioned Rob Hunt.

"Thar's game 'nough; the next thing's for ye to git it," answered the man sententiously; and his tones implied he had little opinion of either the hunting or fishing abilities of his young guests.

"Have there been many parties up here this season?" asked Ben.

"Nary a one, unless a yawl full of youngsters that went up here day 'fore yesterday was bound up to the lakes. They didn't stop here, an' I didn't notice whether they took to the brook or kept on up the river," was the reply.

They were now at the cabin, which the lads

found on entering contained only two rooms and a loft. In the outer or living apartment, however, a long table was already set out, and two women, whom their host informed them were his wife and daughter, were busy putting food upon it.

A single glance convinced Harry that in the matter of quantity at least he and his comrades need have no misgiving. There was a whole boiled ham, a huge dish of potatoes, another of baked beans, and an uncut loaf of hot brown bread; while from the stove came the agreeable odor of coffee.

Five minutes after their entrance the supper was ready, and to the hungry boys the coarse food proved not only palatable but very inviting. From the amount they stowed away in the next half hour Mrs. McPherson must have felt highly complimented.

Finding the young visitors were from "the States," Mr. McPherson conversed with them for an hour or two after their repast was over, anxious to learn all he could about a region which he evidently regarded as a marvel of prosperity. At length, however, he showed them to the loft, where they found several rough beds of blankets, and throwing themselves upon these, they were soon asleep.

At an early hour the next morning they were called to a meal as substantial as that of which they had partaken the night before. When this had been eaten, they settled with their host for their entertainment, and purchasing of him several bushels of potatoes, once more embarked upon the launch and resumed their trip.

Turning into the stream, which emptied into the river a little above the landing, they steamed slowly up its rapid current. Two hours later, as they rounded a sharp bend in the creek, Cripple Ben turned to Fred Williams, who sat near him, and asked:

"What does that look like?"

Fred and the other lads glanced quickly up the stream, and saw to their surprise an Indian encampment. It was composed of a dozen or fifteen wigwams, situated on a small island in a natural meadow, bordered by a grove of sugar maples. The wigwams were built in regular Indian fashion, circular in form, with oval tops, and covered with bark.

The entrances were low, and all the structures looked as though a full-grown person could not stand upright in them. The squaws and pappooses now came crowding out, and stared at the passing launch with wonder and curiosity. Possibly it was the first steam vessel they had

ever seen, and they could not account for her steady advance, without sail or paddles. No men, however, were visible about the encampment, and were perhaps absent upon some fishing or hunting expedition.

Fred made no response to Ben's question until the village was left behind, when he said:

"They were real Indians, weren't they? I had no idea we'd find them up here. Do you suppose they are dangerous?"

The marked anxiety in this inquiry brought a laugh from his companions.

"Only in one way," remarked Ben drily; "you'll want to look out they don't steal the clothes off your back, for they'll do it if they get a chance."

A little before noon the stream suddenly narrowed between two mountain spurs, and the *Fire-Fly*, dashing at full speed through the deep and rapid waters at this point, glided out into a broad pool just below the falls. The water was of sufficient depth to allow the launch to come alongside of the west bank; and right in front of a plot of greensward, shaded by a grove of immense oaks, looking cool and delicious, Ben stopped.

"Here is where I camped before," he remarked, "but we'd better fasten the launch,

and look around a spell before we decide on a place to pitch the tents."

So the lads secured the boat, and clambered up the sloping bank among the trees to the pebbly shore of the lake. Then an exclamation of delight escaped them.

Before them stretched a scene of unprecedented beauty. As far as the eye could reach was a sheet of clear and sparkling water. Islands of every imaginable contour rose up within it, and hills of varied height, whose tops bristled with clumps of fir, surrounded it.

Quiet sylvan nooks opened between the spurs, while patches of water-lilies, arrowheads, and other aquatic plants covered the surface of the lake, or mossy banks overhung with the dark foliage of the hemlock cast their shadows beneath.

In the cool depths of the placid waters were myriads of finny tribes, as the beholders knew by the splash and ripples they made as they leaped to catch the unwary fly; overhead wheeled flocks of wild water fowls; and off in a secluded cove fed a group of fallow deer.

"Could you ask a better place for a two months' sojourn?" cried Harry enthusiastically.

"If we could only camp upon that island!" exclaimed Rob Hunt.

The other boys looked in the direction he was pointing, and saw nearly opposite them quite a large isle, with groves of maple, beech and birches, with natural meadows luxuriant with native grasses, and glowing with patches of wild flowers.

"It won't do to be so far away from the launch," commented Harry with a shade of disappointment in his tones, "but you are right about its being the place for a camp. That is finer than any spot along the shore."

"Perhaps we can find some way to get the *Fire-Fly* up here," said Cripple Ben; "wouldn't it be just grand to steam around this lake!"

His suggestion was received with cheers.

"We'll see later," Harry declared; "for the present, we'll fix our camp down there by the launch. Come on, let's have dinner, and then put up the tents."

His companions followed him back to the pool, where from their abundant stores they soon had ready an ample meal, and when this had been despatched, the work of unloading their goods and arranging the camp began.

They found Mr. Wallace had provided them with two tents, one fourteen by eighteen and

the other ten by twelve feet. These were made of heavy water-proof canvas, and suitably equipped with seasoned white oak poles and stout manilla roping.

The spot selected for pitching them was admirably adapted for the purpose, as it permitted the front of the tents to be put to the east, and so gave them the sun in the morning, and the shade of the adjacent trees in the afternoon.

The larger tent, which was designed for a sleeping apartment, was erected first; and when once stretched to its place, was separated into two unequal parts by a single tier of foot-wide boards, taken from the empty boxes, and run edge-wise across the enclosed space, twelve feet from the back end.

This rear portion was then filled with hemlock boughs to the height of the boards, and, with the two blankets which each possessed, formed a comfortable bed. In the front and smaller part, the chests of the boys were placed, each in such a position that its owner could have ready access to it.

The other tent, which was to be used for storing goods, and for cooking and eating in bad weather, was fitted up with a rude table at its center, also made from the empty boxes. About and under this were packed the camp stores, oil-

stove, and other utensils, so as to be easily reached when wanted for use.

Adequate trenches about both tents, to carry off the water in case of rain, and a stone fire-place, so constructed as to hold a gridiron or pot at its top, completed the arrangement of the encampment.

"Now put up the banners and give the camp a name," shouted Tom Sexsmith.

"What say you to Camp Randall, in honor of the doctor?" asked Harry.

"Agreed!" cried the boys with one voice, and amid their cheers the flags were placed, one at the peak of each tent.

It was already sundown, and making a pot of coffee over the newly built fire-place, the lads contented themselves with a supper from the cold boiled ham and crackers at their command.

When their appetites, already sharpened by their out-door exercise, had been satisfied, Harry called out:

"Come on, three of you, and help me carry the sharpie up to the lake; then it'll be all ready to catch a fish for breakfast."

"You can get one right in the pool," replied Cripple Ben.

"I suppose so," responded Harry, "but I want to try the lake."

Three of the boys joined him, and under their united strength the light boat was taken up the bank and launched upon the lake, where it was securely fastened to the tree.

Then the lads returned to their tent, and after singing a rollicking song or two turned in.

Morning was just breaking when Harry awoke. Stepping carefully over his sleeping companions, so as not to arouse them, he took his rod and went up to the lake.

Unfastening the boat, he pushed it off and slowly sculled out toward the large island opposite him.

When midway between that and the shore, he drew in his oar, adjusted his fly, and made a cast.

Barely had the hook struck the water when a big trout caught it, and, with a whirl that fairly made the reel smoke, ran off fifty feet of the line.

Then the fish turned and darted back toward the boat, and Harry drew in the slack cord with all possible haste.

Away went the gamey creature again, and in the intense excitement of the moment the lad took no notice of the condition of his craft. But when the "speckled beauty," at least three pounds in weight, was secured, he made the

very unpleasant discovery that the water was pouring into the boat through two small holes which had been cut in its bottom.

Dropping his fish, he seized his oars and pulled rapidly for the shore. Before he had made half the distance, however, the sharpie with a sudden lurch sank under him, and left him struggling in the deep water.

CHAPTER X

THE SMASHED BOAT

HAD Harry been unincumbered by his clothing and heavy boots, he would have cared little for his unceremonious ducking, for he was an excellent swimmer. Under the circumstances, however, he realized it would be a doubtful experiment for him to attempt to swim directly for the shore, and so the moment he found himself in the water he turned to the boat to see whether it would afford him any support.

Fortunately, relieved of his weight, the light craft had risen an inch or two above the surface, and catching hold of the edge next to him he bore heavily down upon it. Under this pressure, the opposite side rose slowly in the air, and soon, passing the point of its own equilibrium, the sharpie fell with a loud splash bottom upward, almost carrying the lad beneath it.

With a cry of exultation Wallace now gathered up his oars and rod, which were floating near him, and laying them on the bottom of the

overturned boat, began to push it toward the shore.

Resting occasionally, he at last reached the beach, just as Tom Sexsmith, rod in hand, ran out from the shadow of the surrounding trees.

"Hello, Harry! What's up?" he cried, catching sight of his drenched comrade. "Did you get hold of a fish so big he capsized you?"

The drollery in his tones was irresistible.

"Not exactly," replied Harry with a laugh, "though I did have a nice trout just before I discovered the sharpie was filling with water, but lost it when I capsized. What I want to know is, Who has been tampering with the boat?" and he pointed to the two holes that had been cut in the bottom of the craft.

Tom gave an ejaculation of surprise, and with a quick step was beside his companion, and together they examined the apertures.

They had evidently been made with some sharp-pointed instrument, probably a knife, for they were about an inch in diameter upon the outer side and tapered down to half that size on the interior. A gummy substance still clinging to the holes also showed that they had been carefully filled, so as to escape the notice of the user of the boat until he was well out from the

shore, where the action of the water would speedily force an opening.

"You can see, Tom, that it's a regular put-up job," remarked Harry, when he finished his examination; "and yet the boat was all right when we left it here last night. Who, then, could have been guilty of so mean a trick?"

There was both suspicion and rising anger in the lad's tones, and he looked searchingly at his comrade.

Tom met his gaze unflinchingly, however.

"You may be sure none of our own fellows did it," he replied warmly. "What motive could any one have in doing it, when it involved the risking of your life, Harry? And, then, *when* did they do it?"

The honest, straightforward answer and questions of the boy were convincing.

"You are right, Tom, and I ought not to have suspected one of you for a moment," Harry frankly answered. "We must look outside of our own party for the perpetrator and his motive; but there I'm stuck, for I haven't seen the slightest trace of any one around," and he now began to search the spot where the sharpie had been fastened during the night.

"See here, Tom!" he called the next instant; and when his companion reached him he pointed

out unmistakable signs on the bank that the boat had been pulled in there, and turned upon its side for the dastardly work. A few whittlings, mixed with the loosened dirt, confirmed this fact, while a half-burned match or two indicated that the deed had been done during the night or at least while it was still dark.

"Could it have been an Indian? You know they seemed to be absent from their encampment when we passed there yesterday," exclaimed Tom.

"Perhaps," responded Harry thoughtfully; "but help me pull the boat upon the bank, where we'll leave it until after breakfast, when we'll try to fix it; I'm getting chilly in these wet clothes."

The boys drew the sharpie up out of the water, and then hurried down to the tents. They found the other lads gathered about Cripple Ben, who was exhibiting two handsome trout he had just caught in the pool.

"Where's your fish, Harry?" they asked, then noticing his wet garments, they eagerly inquired what had happened.

His story was quickly told, and Tom's suggestion that some Indian from the encampment down the stream might have injured the boat was added.

All were ready to accept this explanation of the deed but Ben. When asked about it he slowly shook his head.

"Had an Indian run across the boat he would have been apt to steal it," he said; "or if unable to make off with it undiscovered, would have stove in the bottom and left it completely disabled. Then he wouldn't have been likely to use matches around there. If he had them at all he would have held them too precious to throw away on such a job."

"I think you are right there, Ben," remarked Harry; "but who do you suppose did do it?"

"I don't know," answered the other; "but we must find out. One thing is sure, too: it won't do to leave the camp alone, and the boats had better be brought down here every night until we solve the mystery. But change your clothes, Harry, while I clean and broil these fish, and we'll have breakfast."

During the meal, which was soon ready, the strange incident of the morning was freely discussed, but no new light was thrown upon it.

"We must watch and wait," Ben said; "only give us time, and we shall know who did this thing, and his reason for it. Remember what I tell you."

After breakfast all the boys went up to the lake to look at the disabled boat.

"I can fix this in a few minutes so it'll be just as good as new," commented Ben, after he had made a critical examination of the sharpie. "One of you run down to the camp and bring me a piece of seasoned pine about an inch thick; and another one of you get me some of the fresh pitch from a hemlock-tree."

Two of the lads hastened away on these errands, and when they returned with the materials, Ben deftly plugged the holes, and smeared them over with the gum. Then the boat was laid out upon the pebbly beach in the sun to dry.

"When can we use the craft again?" asked Harry, after the repairs were finished; "I'm anxious to try my luck with that trout once more."

"To-morrow," answered Ben; "but the yawl can be brought up here for your use to-day, if you wish. Only don't forget to bring it, and the sharpie too, back to the pool for the night."

"What shall be our plans for the day, boys?" asked Tom Sexsmith, who had been amusing himself for a few minutes by skipping stones across the smooth surface of the lake.

"First, let us decide who is to look out for

the camp, and then the rest of us can arrange our plans,'' suggested Fred Williams. ,

"I tell you,'' broke in Rob Hunt at this point; ''why not arrange the care of the camp alphabetically? That will make it my job to-day, Ben's to-morrow, and Reynolds the next day. Then will come Tom's turn, to be followed by Harry, Williams and Willis; after that we'll go the rounds again.''

''Oh! you needn't do that,'' Ben exclaimed, ''I'm willing to look out for the camp most of the time.''

''You'll be around a good deal, of course, and so will be company for the fellow who happens to have the watch,'' responded Harry, ''but I don't think you ought to be obliged to stay there any oftener than your regular day; do you, boys?''

''No, no!'' all heartily declared, and so Hunt's proposition was unanimously adopted.

He went back to the tents to remain there until night, while the others got their rods and guns for the day's sports.

Ben and Ed Willis decided to take the yawl, and drop down the stream for fishing; Frank Reynolds and Fred Williams took their guns and went up the shore of the lake looking for birds; while Tom and Harry took their rifles

and struck off across the hills in search of larger game.

At noon, however, all were back in camp, each laden with some booty as a proof of his prowess.

Ben and Ed brought fifteen trout, the smallest not under a pound in weight, while one pulled the spring scales down to the four-pound notch. Fred and Frank brought in a half-dozen snipe and a large black gander, which, as they termed it, persisted in getting in front of their guns; while Tom and Harry proudly held up a twenty-pound wildcat, and had a stirring story to tell of their fight with him and his mate, which, though wounded, had escaped.

Soon the snipe and several of the fish were broiling for dinner, and with appetites made keen by the bracing air and healthful exercise, the lads attacked them as soon as they were done.

In the midst of their feasting and merry-making Ben, who sat facing the falls, suddenly cried out: "Look there!"

His companions glanced around and saw their sharpie, which they had left high and dry upon the pebbly beach of the lake only a few hours before, sweeping down with the swift current toward the precipice. The next instant it plunged over into the rocky abyss twenty feet

below. Striking stern first, the frail craft fell forward its whole length with a violent crash, and was stoven into a dozen pieces, which floated swiftly down the running stream.

The boat had hardly struck when Harry Wallace leaped to his feet.

"That sharpie never came over those falls without help!" was his cry, and then he dashed up the bank toward the lake.

CHAPTER XI

THE DESPOILED TENTS

IN ANOTHER minute the lad paused upon the shore of the lake, eagerly scanning its tranquil surface, but not a single person was in sight.

The sparkling water rushed through the narrow passageway which led over the falls with its usual impetuosity, and Harry realized at once that for any boat to enter there meant its sure destruction. Whoever was instrumental, therefore, in sending the sharpie down that swift current must have been careful not to allow himself to approach near enough to the narrows to be swept over the precipice.

Off toward the big island, and further up the lake, among the numerous islets, aquatic birds of various kinds were swimming or feeding quietly. Evidently they had not been disturbed recently by the passing of any boat hastening to the cover of some one of the adjacent woody nooks. He must look, then, for traces of the miscreants along the shore.

His eye ran quickly over the spot where the boat had been left that morning, and along the pebbly beach toward the narrows at the head of the falls, but not a mark or track did he discover that indicated the presence of man.

"It's strange," he muttered aloud.

"What's strange?" asked Tom Sexsmith, who at this moment, accompanied by three of the other lads, arrived upon the scene.

Harry pointed out the signs he had noted, and the conclusions he had drawn.

"That boat didn't turn over and jump into the lake itself," he continued; "nor was there time for a boat to get under the shelter of those islands before I reached here. How, then, was it sent over the falls?"

"Two fellows could have lifted the sharpie up, set it into the water, and, pulling it to the narrows, pushed it out from the shore far enough for the current to catch it, and the work was done," suggested Tom promptly.

Without a word Harry started down the shore toward the falls, and was immediately followed by his companions.

Arriving at the point a little in advance of the others, he suddenly sprang forward and picked up a pocket handkerchief, which lay in plain sight upon the beach.

"Here is a clew to the rascals," he cried exultingly, and holding up the object so that his friends could see it.

They quickly gathered about him and examined the piece of linen with great curiosity.

It was plain white, and neatly folded, but coarse and inexpensive, and without a distinguishing mark of any kind.

"That proves it isn't Indians who have been cutting up these pranks, anyway!" exclaimed Frank Reynolds when the examination was over.

"Yes, and the owner can't be far away, boys; let's search for him," called out Tom Sexsmith excitedly.

The lads now scattered among the surrounding shrubbery, and for some minutes looked eagerly around for the person or persons who they knew must have been in that locality a brief time before, but at last they were compelled to abandon the search as hopeless.

On their return to the camp, they showed the strange handkerchief to Ben and Rob Hunt.

"The mystery is beginning to unravel already," was Ben's remark; "we now know, as I have suspected, that there is another camping party here."

"Who can they be?" asked several in amazement.

"I can only give you the slightest clew," answered Ben. "Don't you remember that down at the landing I asked McPherson if there had been many parties up here lately, and he said none except a yawl full of young fellows that had passed there two days before we had come up here?"

"Yes," replied his companions, a flood of light breaking upon them.

"Well," went on Ben, "they must be here. As they had nothing but a yawl, they could easily carry it around the falls, and are now probably camping either upon one of the islands of the lake, or in some nook along the shore. They noticed our arrival, and it is to them Harry owes his ducking and the smashing of my boat."

"But what in the world do they want to treat us in this sneaking way for?" asked the wrathful Harry. "We haven't harmed them, and there's room enough for both parties up here."

"So it seems to us," replied Ben, "but for some reason they seem to think not. What that reason is I don't know; but we've only to wait, and we shall find that out too."

"Meantime they'll destroy everything we've got," cried Fred Williams in disgust.

"No they won't," responded Ben decidedly. "Whoever they are, we ought to be sharp enough to look out for our own property, now that we know it is in danger, and outwit them at every point."

"That's so," put in Harry with his usual energy; "we want to keep a strict watch over the camp, the boats, and the lake, night and day, until those fellows are discovered. It ought not to take us very long, after all, to run them down, for you see they can't fish in the open lake, or fire a gun, or do much cooking in their camp, without giving themselves away. When we've found out who they are, and their motive in acting as they do toward us, we can tell better what we'll do to them."

All saw the wisdom of this advice, and it was promptly adopted.

The camp and lake were kept under strict surveillance that afternoon, and dividing the night into three watches of four hours each, Harry, Tom and Fred Williams took turns in keeping guard until morning. Nothing suspicious, however, was seen or heard.

It was now Ben's turn to remain at the camp for the day, and he determined not to go out of

sight of it for a moment. His companions, moreover, planned their own sports so as to keep watch of the lake and its surrounding shores.

Harry and Tom were set across the pool, and, with their guns, went among the hills on that side as if to hunt for birds, but in reality to search for the hidden camp.

The other boys then carried the yawl up to the lake, where Bob Hunt and Ed Willis embarked for a fishing and inspecting tour among the islands; while Fred Williams and Frank Reynolds, with their guns, went along the west shore, and among the neighboring spurs in quest, as they facetiously termed it, "of either beasts, birds or men."

Noon came, and brought all the lads back to the encampment, not without some proofs that their trip had been fruitful, but without having discovered anything that revealed either the identity or the whereabouts of those for whom they had been searching.

The day was a hot one, and for several hours after dinner the boys remained at the tents, their chief theme of conversation while they rested being the mystery that so persistently baffled them.

Toward night the yawl was again carried up

to the lake, and Tom and Harry went beyond the great island to try their luck at pickereling, while the other lads took a bucket and went over to a mountain spur a half-mile away, where Frank and Fred had discovered during their morning tramp a large tract of luscious blueberries.

Left alone, Ben sat down at the door of the larger tent, and was soon absorbed in a book Harry had loaned him. Suddenly he heard a startling cry from down the stream: "Help! Help!"

He listened intently, and quickly heard it again, though more faintly: *"Help! Help!"*

Without stopping to think that none of his own comrades had gone in that direction, he seized his crutches and hobbled rapidly off toward the place, from which the call came again and again.

The mountain spur below the pool forced him to make quite a détour, and the underbrush hindered his rapid advance, but at last he reached the bank of the stream below the rapids, and paused to listen for the distressing cry.

No sound other than that of the gurgling brook reached him, and he called out several times: "Who are you? Where are you?"

Receiving no answer, it finally flashed upon

him that the cry was a ruse to attract him away from the tents. Startled by the thought, he turned about and retreated his steps as fast as possible.

It took him some minutes, however, to return; and when he again came in sight of the encampment he stopped in sheer dismay.

The tents were down, and boxes, goods and utensils were scattered about in the wildest disorder.

CHAPTER XII

THE LOUP-CERVIERS

ONLY for a moment did Cripple Ben stand gazing at the despoiled camp; then he rapidly crossed the clearing, and clambered up the bank to the shore of the lake.

Drawing a small whistle from his pocket, he blew three short, shrill blasts. It was the signal agreed upon by the members of the camping party should any occasion arise for calling the absent ones to the tents.

Hardly had the last note died away among the surrounding hills when, from behind the island, came three keen whistles in return, and two minutes later the yawl dashed in sight, driven by the powerful strokes for which Tom and Harry were already famous.

It did not need Ben's beckoning hand to hasten them on; they were coming at their highest speed, and in an almost incredibly short space of time the boat touched the beach, and the occupants, leaping ashore, asked simultaneously:

"What has happened, Ben?"

"Those rascals have gone through the camp!" was the startling reply.

"Gone through the camp!" exclaimed both lads in amazement; "and with you right there? How did they do it?"

"I wasn't there," answered Ben ruefully, for he was provoked that he had allowed himself to be outwitted; then he told how he had been decoyed down the stream while the work of pillaging the camp was going on.

"Never mind, Ben; you acted from the best motives," Harry said when the story was finished; "and perhaps they haven't carried away very much, after all, for they had but a few minutes to do their work in. We'll soon know the worst. Here, Tom, take hold with me, and we'll drag the yawl down the bank. I don't dare leave it here a moment, for fear the robbers will make off with that."

It was a hard job for the two boys to pull the heavy boat to the edge of the bank, but with the little help Ben could give, they succeeded in doing it, and then, with a couple of round sticks for rollers, they ran it quickly down to the encampment.

At first sight, the work of the depredators seemed to have been thoroughly done; but, after

a little inspection, the lads concluded there was nothing of special value missing.

The tent ropes, moreover, had simply been untied, and the canvas of each allowed to collapse over the place where it was pitched, with the greater part of its contents under it.

The articles strewn about the camp-ground were only such as had been most accessible to the intruders; and indeed the longer the boys went on with their task of restoring the camp to order, the more evident it became that no particular harm had been done to their outfit, and they could think of no other reason for the act of their unknown visitors than the desire to annoy them.

Before the tents had been fully set to rights, the other lads returned from their berrying trip, bringing with them a pailful of delicious fruit.

When they learned of the last trick of their mysterious rivals, their indignation knew no bounds, and they not only expressed their opinion of those who would stoop to so mean an act, but accompanied those expressions with some strong threats, which, if they could have been carried out, would have made it unpleasant for the perpetrators. It was perhaps well that with their usual good fortune they had escaped.

When, however, their wrath had subsided, Rob Hunt asked:

"Are you sure nothing has been taken?"

"Quite sure," replied Harry Wallace; "we thought at first the guns had been carried off, but found them tucked under the blankets and among the hemlock boughs. Our oil-stove was put into our stone fire-place, and the other utensils scattered around; but all I believe are here. At least I can't think of anything we haven't found; can you, Tom or Ben?"

The former shook his head, but the latter replied with a peculiar smile:

"I have missed two things from the very first, and have wondered how long it would be before the rest of you would notice their absence."

"Two things!" exclaimed his hearers, glancing around. "What are they?"

"The banners," he replied with an emphasis as peculiar as the smile he had shown a moment before.

"The banners!" echoed his comrades in consternation. Not one of them thought of the flags until then, but they now realized that the silk pennants which had been floating proudly over their tents were indeed gone, and the most careful search for the next half-hour failed to show the place of their concealment.

"What do you think has become of them, Ben?" Harry finally asked.

"Carried off," replied Ben laconically.

"But why should they have been carried away, while everything else is left?" inquired Harry in surprise.

"Because they were what the fellows were after," answered the crippled lad significantly.

"I don't understand you, Ben," Harry remarked a little impatiently, while the other boys, attracted by the conversation, crowded about the two.

"I mean that the absence of the banners proves who our visitors are, and leaves but one question for us to settle—that of their whereabouts," Ben explained.

"Who are they?" questioned Harry, still failing to see what Ben was driving at.

"The Melrose High School Boat Club," was the answer.

Had a thunder-clap broken above the camp a more impressive silence could not have followed.

It was brief, however.

"How did they get here?"

"What possessed them to come?"

"How did they know where we were going?"

These, and a dozen similar questions, greeted

Ben's announcement as soon as his companions recovered from the astonishment into which they were thrown.

He answered them all in three sentences:

"They wanted the flags. It was easy enough for them to find out where we were going; and by taking the cars to Halifax, and thence to Annapolis, they got in ahead of us."

A chorus of exclamations and comments were now poured forth by all but Harry Wallace; he lapsed into silence, and seemed lost in thought. But when appealed to by the others for his opinion of Ben's remarkable assertion, he said:

"He is right, as usual. This explains all the tricks played upon us, and the reason for them. But, dropping all that now, we have a work before us to which our sports for the time must give way."

"What's that?" asked all.

"To recover those banners," he said with decision.

"We must find them first," suggested Tom Sexsmith, with one of his droll grimaces.

"Exactly," responded Harry with a laugh; "and to-morrow morning we'll begin our search. It is Reynolds's turn to take charge here, and as the rest of us will be gone all day, it will be

too bad to leave him alone, so I'll ask Williams to stay here with him."

"Then Ben and Tom, Ed, Rob and myself, will take the yawl and make a tour of the lake, calling at every island large enough to conceal a tent. If we reach the head of the lake without finding the hidden camp, we'll divide up: two will land on one side of the inlet, two upon the other, and follow the shore around until we meet at the falls, while Ben rows the boat."

This plan, after some discussion, was adopted, and carried out in detail the next day.

Leaving Fred and Frank in the camp, with strict orders that at no time should both be absent from it, the other five embarked in the yawl and rowed directly over to the large island. Landing there, they searched it from one end to the other, but found no trace of an encampment.

As they were about to depart, Rob Hunt remarked:

"I tell you, boys, if we'd only made our camp here at the outset, as I suggested, instead of down at the pool, we shouldn't now be minus one of our boats and both of our banners; for no one could then have attempted either of the tricks that has been played on us without giving himself dead away."

"I know it," Ben quickly answered, "and

with the launch here, we should have had full command of the lake, with every advantage over our rivals. I think that the wisest thing for us to do is to give up this trip, and find some way of moving our whole outfit to this place."

Harry shook his head.

"No," he said, "we'll go on. I'm anxious to locate those fellows before they can destroy or make off with the flags. After we've done that we'll see about taking possession of the island."

Their journey was therefore resumed. From isle to isle they went, encircling all, and stopping at every one large enough to hide an encampment; but when noon came the head of the lake was reached, and no trace of their hidden foe had been found.

Landing now upon the right bank of the stream, that here poured into the lake, they ate the dinner they had brought with them; then Harry and Tom were set across to the left bank, while Rob and Ed remained upon the right, and their long tramp down the opposite shores began. Meantime, Ben entered the yawl and pulled leisurely back to the lower end of the body of water to wait for his comrades when they arrived there.

Harry had chosen the north and west shores

for Tom and himself for two reasons: the shape of the lake made this the longest route to the falls; then, too, since their search had proved that the other camp was not upon one of the islands, he believed it was hidden somewhere among the spurs upon this side.

For some way their course led through heavy woods, where the ground was comparatively level, and they made rapid progress. Then they came to a mountain spur, which rose abruptly out of the water, compelling them either to climb up its rugged side or make a long détour around it.

They decided upon the former, and slowly made their way to its summit, where they stopped a few minutes to rest, and to look about them.

In front was an extensive view of the sheet of water, and the hills and valleys of the opposite shore; to the left was the sloping hillside and heavy woodland through which they had just come; to the right, and in the direction that they were soon to take, was a sharp descent into a narrow and secluded valley. Beyond this was another spur, not as high as that upon which they stood, and over whose top they could look into a second vale, where they caught sight of

a considerable brook that coursed downward into the lake.

From among the trees on its banks a thin column of smoke was slowly rising. The moment Harry detected it, he grasped Tom's arm, saying:

"There is the tent for which we are searching! Come on!"

Down the side of the spur the lads dashed, and reaching its foot, started across the ravine to the opposite hill.

As they began the ascent, a sudden growl from a clump of bushes in front arrested their steps, and the next moment a loup-cervier, or Canada lynx, with glaring eyes and bristling back, sprang out from the shrubbery and came bounding toward them.

It was a female, and a low whine in the underbrush revealed that she had cubs, and accounted for her boldness in the attack she was about to make upon the intruders.

The boys had nothing but their shot-guns, and before they could swing these forward for use a savage growl above their heads caused them to glance in that direction.

To their alarm, they saw the male lynx crouching for a spring on the branch of a large

beech not ten feet away, and a trifle to their rear.

They had evidently stumbled upon the lair of the ferocious pair, and, with no other weapons than their fowling-pieces, both lads knew that the outcome of their inevitable struggle with the beasts was uncertain.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HIDDEN CAMP

CRITICAL as was the situation, Harry did not lose his head. Glancing around for some place that would afford Tom and himself an opportunity to withstand the attack of the ferocious pair, his eyes fell upon a huge bowlder a few rods away, three of whose sides were precipitous, while the other was sufficiently shelving to allow an agile person to climb to its summit. Instantly his plan of action was formed.

"Shoot at the lynx in front of you, Tom," he said in a steady undertone; "take her in the eyes and blind her, that's your only chance. I'll fix the one in the tree, then we'll run for that big rock on the left. Quick!"

At these words the slight flurry that had seized Tom on finding himself surrounded by the loup-cerviers vanished, and coolly raising his gun, he let fly with both barrels directly into the face of the animal, that was already crouching for her spring.

The report of Harry's gun was like an echo to his own, and then, without stopping to see the result of their shots, both rushed for the bowlder.

They reached it and clambered to its top none too soon, for the male lynx was already at their heels, and his fierce effort to climb up after them was only checked by a vigorous blow upon his head from the butt of Harry's weapon.

As the beast slid back to the ground he was joined by his mate, and, to the satisfaction of the boys, they now saw Tom's shot had been true to its mark, and the animal's eyesight was destroyed. Harry's aim, however, could not have been so good a one, for, though he had hit the male, it was upon the forehead, and did not seriously injure him.

Neither lynx in fact was as yet disabled; for the moment the female joined her companion the pair bounded up the shelving rock, and as the lads had not time to put fresh cartridges into their guns, they were compelled to use them as clubs.

Swinging them above their heads, they brought them down upon the advancing beasts with a force that sent them, partially stunned, back to the foot of the bowlder. Before they

could recover sufficiently to renew the attack, the boys were able to reload their weapons.

As the loup-cerviers again came up the rock, the lads took careful aim and fired. Harry shot at the male, and having thrust his fowling-piece well up against the animal's throat, the charges from the barrels did not have space to scatter. Like a solid slug they were poured into the jugular vein of the savage beast, and he rolled down the bowlder in his dying throes.

Tom's shot, while not so effective as his comrade's, broke the fore leg of the female and inflicted an ugly wound in her breast; but notwithstanding this, she was upon the rock the next moment snapping savagely at its occupants.

The top of the ledge was comparatively level, but long and exceedingly narrow, and, by dodging to the right and left, the boys succeeded in avoiding her, while she, in her effort to turn and pursue them, lost her footing and went over the most precipitous side, a distance of twenty feet and more, to the rocks below.

Bruised by the fall, and bleeding from her wounds, she possibly might have abandoned her attack and slunk away with her cubs through the underbrush had not another intruder upon

her rightful domain at this moment appeared.

This was no other than Cripple Ben.

He heard the first shots of his companions while pulling down the lake, and anxious to know what they were firing at he turned the yawl and ran in shore. He reached it just as the second shots of the lads rang forth and, seizing his crutches, he hobbled off into the woods in the direction of the sound.

He arrived in sight of the bowlder just in time to see the female lynx come tumbling down its side. As she gathered to her feet she heard his approaching footsteps, and with a yell of rage bounded toward him.

Not until that moment were Tom and Harry aware of his coming. They sent forth a cry of fear as they saw the maddened beast spring for the unarmed and crippled lad; then they jumped to the ground and dashed to his rescue.

But Ben proved he was quite able to look out for himself. He noticed the animal was blind, and with a quick movement threw one of his crutches a few feet in advance and to the left of the place where he was standing. The ruse was successful, for the loup-cervier, doubtless thinking her new antagonist was moving in that direction, leaped after the stick.

As she landed and furiously caught it be-

tween her cruel jaws, Ben swung himself into a sitting position just in front of her, and, with a motion so rapid as to be almost imperceptible, jabbed the small end of his remaining crutch into one of her torn and bleeding eyes.

There was an iron point upon the stick, and the arm that made the thrust had a strength which drove the instrument into the vulnerable socket to the depth of several inches.

In all probability it reached the base of the brain, for the lynx, with a plaintive whine, stretched herself out upon the ground, and after a few convulsive shudders expired.

"Hurrah for Ben and his crutch!" shouted Tom as he and Harry reached the victorious lad.

"Even a crutch is better than no weapon, when you have to tackle that kind of a creature," quietly remarked Ben, as he extricated his singular weapon from the wound, and picked up its mate, to see if the loup-cervier had injured it beyond repair.

He found, save a few deep punctures from the animal's sharp teeth, that it was as good as ever. Supporting himself upon it, he shook hands with the other lads and listened to their exciting story. He then explained how he came

to be there; after which the male lynx was drawn down beside the female.

"I tell you, Harry, wouldn't those fellows look fine mounted in the museum at the Institute?" said Tom, as he and his comrades surveyed the ferocious pair.

"Take them down to the yawl, and I'll carry them to the falls for you," added Ben; "then we'll see if we can't preserve their hides for stuffing."

"How about the young ones?" asked Harry, walking over to the thicket where they were last seen.

His companions followed him, but no trace of the little fellows could they discover. Evidently alarmed at the fate of their parents, they had made off, perhaps for their den, wherever that was located.

So the boys returned to the large ones and dragged their carcasses down to the lake, no great distance away, and flung them into the boat. Then Ben resumed his oars, while Tom and Harry renewed their search for the hidden camp.

"I suspect those fellows heard our guns," Harry remarked, as he and Tom started for the second time up the hillside.

"That's so," responded his comrade, "but

they can't move their camp before we will be upon them."

"'No; but some of them may come over this way to see what the firing was for, and getting trace of us, they may be off before we have a chance to get the banners," suggested Harry.

"If we can only creep up to their encampment undiscovered, we'll soon find out, from their conversation, whether they have taken the alarm," replied Tom.

"That's just it," said Harry quickly; "we must learn all we can of them without giving ourselves away, so we can't be too cautious in our approach."

Tom readily agreed to this. They advanced, therefore, at a slow pace, pausing every few minutes to listen, and making as little noise as possible.

Once upon the top of the hill, they gazed eagerly off in the direction where they saw the smoke when on the opposite mountain spur, but none now appeared. Evidently their rivals had heard the guns, and alarmed at the proximity of the sounds had put out their fire.

Confident, however, that they could soon trace out the camp, our friends quietly descended to the brook, glimpses of which they caught through the surrounding trees.

On arriving at the stream, they found it narrow but deep, while its current was quite sluggish. Pointing out these facts, Harry said in low tones:

"You see, Tom, there's nothing to hinder a boat from coming in here from the lake, and going up the brook for some distance. I believe that's what the High School boys have done, and somewhere on this or the other bank we'll find their camp."

"Since it's as likely to be this as the other, and we can't cross here anyway, we may as well go up this side," replied Tom, with a faint attempt at facetiousness.

With a nod of assent, Harry led the way through the trees that overhung the creek. A quarter of a mile further they came to a projection of the adjacent hill around which the stream wound, and where its bank was high and steep.

Creeping cautiously to the top of this knoll, the lads came to a sudden stop, for below them and not ten rods away they saw the white canvas of a tent and heard the faint murmuring of voices.

But a thick growth of underbrush along the hillside prevented them from seeing *who* was in the camp, and they were still too far off to

distinguish *what* its occupants were saying; so, after a whispered consultation, they decided to crawl, under the cover of the shrubbery, near enough to ascertain these two facts.

It was a difficult task, but they had nearly accomplished it when they were startled by steps coming hurriedly toward them. Then a voice that they recognized as Reed Jones's said, with a distinctness which showed he could not be more than a few feet away:

"I thought I heard some one coming down the hill, boys. I tell you, we've got to be careful, or those fellows will be on us before we can get out of this."

Then, by the sounds that reached the concealed lads, they knew several of his companions had joined him, and it was apparent that a systematic search of the hillside was to be made at once.

Crouching low, under a heavy mountain laurel, our young friends waited with bated breath, knowing they might be discovered at any moment.

CHAPTER XIV

INTERCEPTED

THROUGH a singular yet laughable circumstance, however, the concealed lads were not discovered.

Reed Jones had actually laid his hands upon the very thicket under which they were crouching, and was about to press aside its branches to look beneath it, when a loud scream from Jack Howard caused him to abandon his purpose.

Jack, when called to the search by his leader, had started to examine that portion of the hillside bordering upon the brook. This selection happened to take him near the place where the refuse from the camp had been thrown, and to his discomfiture a short-legged, heavy-bodied animal feeding there, surprised by his approach, darted suddenly between his legs, throwing him to the ground.

Falling heavily upon his face into the unwholesome pile, it was some seconds before he could scramble to his feet and look around in

search of the creature that had been the sole cause of his unceremonious tumble. Then he cried out:

"This way, boys! Here's the intruder! There he goes now across the camp-ground! Confound him, he tripped me up!"

"Its a big otter," exclaimed one of the other boys, catching sight of the fleeing animal. "Let's capture him!"

There was immediately a scampering of feet in that direction, and Harry and Tom arose from their recumbent positions in time to see all the occupants of the rival camp dash away up the ravine in hot pursuit of the beast which, by his opportune appearance, had saved them from discovery.

"Do you suppose the banners are in the tent?" asked Harry in suppressed excitement the instant the last one of the pursuing boys had disappeared in the shrubbery. "If so, now's our chance to recover them."

"I'm with you to find out," responded Tom heartily, "but after seeing about the flag what's to hinder our getting into their yawl and dropping down to the lake? It'll be a sight easier than to tramp around to the falls, and will make amends for the boat they've destroyed."

Harry resolutely shook his head.

"No," he said, "we'll touch nothing that doesn't belong to us; and having secured the banners our trouble with these fellows will be over, for we'll take care they don't interfere with us again. Quick now, before they can come back!"

With noiseless tread the two lads stepped out into the little glade and hastened over to the tent. They found it a small affair, not over eight by ten feet in size, and they could not help wondering how six boys found it large enough to afford them shelter.

The explanation came as soon as they looked inside; the inclosed ground was completely covered with hemlock boughs, and evidently was merely used for sleeping purposes. This view was confirmed by their finding the camp utensils and supplies, meagre at the best, packed up at the south side of the structure.

But the banners for which the boys had come were nowhere to be seen, and the most careful search within and without the tent failed to disclose them.

Warned at length by the approaching steps of the absent campers that they must be going, they, chagrined at the fruitlessness of their search, fled back to the cover of the surrounding trees.

Pausing among the bushes long enough to ascertain from the conversation of the returning lads that, while they had failed to catch the otter, they nevertheless attributed to him the sounds they had heard upon the hillside, Harry and Tom then crept cautiously over the spur and down into the adjoining valley.

From this point by a long détour they descended the stream far enough to effect a crossing, and thence passed over the hills on that side to the falls, where they found not only Cripple Ben, but their two comrades who had returned by the northern border of the lake, waiting for them.

"Hello! there is Tom and Harry!"

"What luck, boys?"

"Better than we've had, I hope."

These were the salutations that greeted the new-comers, and to which they simultaneously replied:

"Well, we've found the other camp."

The cheers that followed this announcement speedily brought the two boys who had been left in charge of the encampment to the scene. Learning the cause of their companions' exhilaration they joined with them most vociferously, until Bob Hunt found breath to say:

"Give us the points, Harry!"

"Wait until we reach the tent," he answered; and then Tom and he helped the others carry the dead lynxes and the yawl down the slope to the camp, after which they related the circumstances under which the hiding place of their rivals had been discovered, and how they had actually visited the tent in search of the missing banners.

"Baffled in this attempt to recover them, what course shall we now take?" asked Harry when the story in all its details had been told.

"Let us lie in wait, and clean them out of boat, tent, and everything else we can get hold of," exclaimed Ed Willis, rubbing his hands in a way that indicated he was fairly aching for a job of that kind. "Then they'll be glad to return the banners for enough to take them out of this howling wilderness."

The flushed cheeks of the other lads revealed their approval of this plan.

"We might do something in that way, I admit," Harry replied, looking anxiously around at his excited comrades; "but I tell you, boys, I hate to undertake anything as mean as that. You know the doctor urged us to do nothing that would disgrace the banners, and for myself I'd rather lose them than show a spirit of

retaliation towards those fellows, much as they may deserve it."

This noble sentiment was not without its effect upon his hearers.

"We might row boldly up to their camp and demand the flags," suggested Fred Williams. "Perhaps when they find out we know they are here they'll restore them rather than have us report them at Melrose."

"Don't you flatter yourself on any such freak of good-will as *that*," put in Tom Sexsmith. "Reed Jones and Jack Howard aren't kittens, to be frightened away at our approach. Much as they would like to avoid us, they are prepared for just such a move on our part. The absence of the banners from their camp proves that, and they'd defy us to our faces if we called on them with any such demand."

"Couldn't we by watching them find out where they had hidden the flags, and so recover them?" asked Frank Reynolds.

"It might be done," assented Harry, slowly, and with the air of one who was not altogether pleased with the project.

"But it would be better to have them return the banners of their own accord," remarked Ben at this point, and guessing at Harry's thought.

"That's it," cried Wallace with animation; "isn't there some way we can bring about that very thing? I should like to see them forced to give them up without a single dishonorable act on our part, or what would be better, I'd like to see their spite changed by our kindness to good feeling, and have them surrender the flags from very shame."

"I guess you intend to stay here some time, or else go home without your banners," said Tom Sexsmith dryly, and with an expressive shrug of his broad shoulders. As for the other lads, they, with the exception of Ben, stared at their leader as though they were not quite sure that he had not lost his senses. The cripple, however, taking up Tom's remark, replied in that singular quietness of tone which was characteristic of him.

"Don't be so sure about that, Sexsmith. Before we give up this idea, I say, 'Let us take account of stock,'" and placing the forefinger of his right hand on the palm of his left, as though about to write down each item, he went on:

"We know our banners are gone. We know the Melrose High School crew is in hiding here. We know from their camping outfit that they are prepared only for a brief stay. We know

from their overheard conversation that they are getting restless under their self-imposed concealment, and are anxious to be off at the earliest moment.

"From these facts may we not conclude that they came here on purpose to run off with the flags, and therefore, having now got possession of them, the very worst misfortune that could befall them would be for them not to be able to carry them away.

"It strikes me, then, that if we only play our cards rightly, they have got themselves into an awful box. Had they followed us up, and camped somewhere on the stream below us, they might have taken the banners, and made off with them without leaving a trace behind. But as it is, we are now between them and their only avenue of escape.

"Their yawl is too heavy for them to carry over the hills, and to reach the river they must pass down either on this or on the other side of the falls. But by right management we ought to be able to prevent that, and every day of their delay makes their condition worse. Confined to their narrow ravine, unable to hunt or fish much, without giving themselves away, it ought not to be a very long time before they offer to make terms with us.

"There certainly will be nothing dishonorable in this course, and it may be special circumstances will arise to effect just such a reconciliation as Harry has wished for. As I said about our finding out who the real culprits were, so I now say about our bringing these fellows to terms: our strongest point is to 'watch and wait.' "

"But to carry out this plan successfully, we ought to move our camp to the big island, and have the launch ready for instant use in patrolling the lake," interposed Harry. "With our tent here we guard this side of the lake effectually, but there is nothing to prevent them from slipping down the other bank some dark night, and making good their escape. On the island, however, with a sharp lookout on our part, they couldn't run by us on either side without our detecting them."

"For that reason the camp must go over to the island to-night, and I will have the launch on the lake to-morrow," said Ben resolutely.

"How are you going to do it?" asked Bob Hunt, incredulously.

"Do you see that big oak overhanging the pool!" was Ben's reply. "Well, a couple of stout pulleys fastened to its branches will enable us to raise the yacht on a level with the bank,

and then she can be put on rollers and pushed over to the lake. The only thing is I shall have to run down to McPherson's for the tackling. But if Tom'll go with me, we'll be off as soon as we can get steam up, and in the two hours before dark we will make good headway towards the river. Meantime, you fellows can move the goods over to the island on the yawl. I'd keep a sharp lookout to-night also, for who knows but it's the very time the other crew will try to slip by us."

Tom readily consented to accompanying Ben on his trip, and in twenty minutes the launch was ready to leave.

"By the way, Harry McPherson is quite a taxidermist, and I might take those lynxes down with me, and leave them for him to stuff for you," Ben remarked as he bade him good bye.

"All right; I shall have no time to attend to them," Harry responded, hastening up to the tent for the animals.

"When shall we expect you back?" he asked, as he threw them on board.

"By to-morrow noon, sure," Ben replied, and the hawser of the *Fire-fly* was cast off, and she steamed swiftly away down the stream.

Tired as Harry and his companions were from the exertions of the day, they thought it

wiser to change their encampment that night, as Ben had proposed; and they now went vigorously about the task.

Fortunately the distance to the island was not great, and, after the traps had been carried up to the shore of the lake it was not a long job to transfer them to their destination. At seven o'clock, therefore, the work of moving was complete.

No attempt was made, however, to bring the camp to order that night. Only the smaller tent was pitched and made habitable, and in this four of the boys soon stretched themselves for a much-needed rest, while the fifth stood guard.

This was Frank Reynolds, and at ten o'clock he called Ed Willis, who was to keep watch until two, and then awaken Harry himself.

But not far from midnight Ed felt sure he heard the sound of oars up the lake, and he aroused Wallace at once. Hurrying over to the western end of the island they listened intently, until both were satisfied that a boat of some kind was steadily approaching.

Noiselessly the lads hurried back to the tent and awoke their sleeping comrades. It was only necessary to tell the lads that the boat of their rivals was close at hand for all to be

wide awake and on the alert. The yawl was then thrust into the water, the oars shipped for instant use; after which they breathlessly awaited events.

The night was dark, and it was impossible to see anything distinctly ten feet away; when therefore the sound of rowing suddenly ceased Harry grew nervous.

"Can they have already passed?" he asked under his breath.

"I don't believe they have, but why don't you fire off a rocket?" whispered Ed Willis. "The worst it can do is to drive them back to their camp."

"Do you know where the rockets were put last evening?" inquired Harry quickly; "if so, bring me two or three."

Ed at once disappeared in the darkness, and returned a moment later with several of the pyrotechnics in his hands. Slipping them under the stern seat of the yawl Wallace gave the quick order:

"Williams, you stay here to look out for the camp; the rest of you tumble into the boat;" then he himself pushed the craft slowly out from the shore.

When clear of the island, he said:

"Be ready with your oars, boys!" and at the

"We must overhaul them, boys."

same time he struck a match and lighted a rocket.

Under the glare it sent forth they saw, not ten rods away, but still up the lake, the yawl of their rivals, loaded with her crew and camping outfit. Evidently they had heard some sound that alarmed them, for they were resting on their oars, and bent forward in the attitude of listeners.

But the moment the rocket flashed up through the darkness, they dipped their oars and pulled back toward their old rendezvous.

Like an inspiration it now came to Harry that the fleeing boat, having loaded for its final departure, had in all probability the lost banners on board, and he cried:

"We must overhaul her, boys! Pull!"

And the next moment the light boat propelled by four strong arms dashed up the lake in the wake of the more heavily loaded one.

CHAPTER XV

HARRY'S MISFORTUNE

HAD Harry and his companions continued to follow the other yawl they would doubtless have overhauled it. But hardly had they gone a half-dozen rods when Wallace thought of a ruse, which he believed would bring his rivals into his hands, and he at once proceeded to put it into execution.

This was to run off toward the southern border of the lake as though bewildered in the heavy darkness; then, when out of hearing of the other boat, to pull straight for the mouth of the stream on which the High School boys had made their camp, and there lie in wait for them to come up.

There were two reasons why he thought this plan would work successfully; he had no other idea than that the discovered lads, on finding they had thrown off the pursuing boat, would return directly to their old encampment, supposing that its whereabouts was still unknown to their followers, then he was confident that his

own better acquaintance with the configuration of the lake, and the lightness of his craft would enable him, though he chose a more roundabout way, easily to outstrip them in reaching the creek.

Communicating his intention to his comrades, therefore, he turned the bow of the yawl gradually to the left without diminishing its speed.

In a few minutes they were aware, even in the gloom, that they were nearing the shore, and ceased their rowing. The next instant the boat touched the beach at a point which they knew must be some distance east of the brook; and, pushing off again, they resumed their oars and ran quickly along the overhanging bank, until its sudden receding and the noise of running water told them they were at the entrance of the watercourse they were seeking.

They now stopped and listened. No sound of an approaching boat as yet reached them, and they were about to congratulate themselves upon this issue of the first step in their undertaking, when they were startled by a rocket which suddenly shot up from the west end of the great island. In its light they saw to their consternation the other yawl close under the south side of the isle, but gliding rapidly down toward

the falls, and knew that Fred Williams was signaling for their return.

What had happened was this:

Reed Jones knew the moment he saw the rival crew dash after him that only by skillful manœuvering could he avoid being overtaken. In the flash of the rocket that Harry Wallace fired he caught sight of the tent on the island, and quickly comprehended that the Institute boys must have moved their encampment. These two thoughts gave birth in his mind therefore to a brilliant and daring scheme.

Under the cover of the darkness he changed the course of his yawl and ran for a few rods off to the right, where he stopped. He was therefore able to trace the movement of the other boat from the sound of its oars until it had run out of hearing. Then he said to his astonished comrades:

"Did you notice the tents on the island, boys? Those Institute fellows have brought their camp up here, and must have left their launch at the foot of the falls. That gives us the biggest chance at them we've had yet, and opens up for us a way of escape."

"How's that?" his companions breathlessly asked.

"Why, we can run right down to this side of

the falls, abandon our yawl and traps, except the guns and the flags, and dash down the bank to the launch. Once on board, we'll cut her loose and be off down the stream before these fellows have time to find out where we've gone. We can take a pair of oars along with us and manage the craft with them until we get up steam; then we'll sail down to Annapolis, or as for that matter, clear home, at our leisure, leaving our friends here to account for and settle for the vessel's disappearance."

"What a joke on them!" exclaimed Jack Howard, as loud as he dared. "Quick! let us be off before their yawl returns down the lake."

There was a little demurring among the rest of the crew at so daring an undertaking, but they were speedily silenced by their leaders. Then it took them but a moment to turn about the boat, and grasping their oars they pulled quickly off toward the falls to carry out their purpose.

They might have succeeded in reaching the pool, only to find their purpose thwarted by the absence of the launch, had not Fred Williams been on the alert.

He had gone down to the west end of the island, on the departure of his comrades, and

by the clicking of the oars in their locks, was able to detect the courses of both crews.

He knew when the High School yawl changed its route and stopped, and also was aware that his friends had passed rapidly over to the opposite side of the lake without noticing this move on the part of their rivals.

With remarkable intuition, however, he suspected the intentions of Jones and his followers, and realized that they must be prevented from escaping. He had no boat, and could therefore think of but one way to accomplish this object: that was to signal for Harry and his crew to return. He immediately thought of the rockets, and hastened to the tent to secure some.

Not knowing just where they were, it took him a few minutes to find them, and before he returned to the upper end of the island, Harry had reached the mouth of the brook and Jones had started down the lake again.

The firing of the rocket, however, was but the work of a moment, and he immediately followed it with another, in the light of which he discovered two things that gave him great satisfaction. The High School boys were resting on their oars as though non-plussed by this unexpected disclosure of their plan, while Harry and his comrades were coming back over their

course as fast as the stiff ash sweeps they knew so well how to handle could bring them.

To annoy, even if it did not hinder, the perplexed lads still further, Fred now fired a third rocket directly over the waiting yawl, and as its light fell full upon the faces of the occupants, he imprudently called out:

"Hey, there, Jones, you may as well come in shore and leave those banners before you go around the falls, for we don't intend for you to carry them off."

"Do you suppose any of those fellows are at the falls?" asked Bill Dunster in a voice intended only for his comrades, but which in the still night air reached Fred's quick ears.

"You'll find out soon enough if you go down there," he cried, following his words with a derisive laugh.

This taunt had its effect, apparently, upon the halting crew, for they again seized their oars and rowed rapidly to the lower end of the island, where they turned and darted up the lake for the second time that night.

Harry and his crew were now near enough to discover this movement, and running by the upper end of the island, they came out into the broad waters beyond in close pursuit of the fleeing boat.

Fred quickly changed his post over to the north side of the isle, and fired his rockets at regular intervals until both yawls had disappeared among a cluster of small islands a half-mile away; then he left them to finish the chase in the darkness.

The proximity of the islet made it difficult for the boats to proceed except with the greatest caution, and each crew was continually stopping to make sure of its course and to listen for the sounds of the other.

But at last Harry, in a spurt to overtake his rivals, whom by the noise of their row-locks he judged to be no great distance ahead, dashed upon one of the isles with a force that threw him and his comrades from their seats; and, before they could recover their position, and clear the yawl from the island, the other yawl had passed out of hearing.

Wallace now resorted to another rocket, and as its light glimmered across the surface of the water he beheld the boat he was pursuing well out from the cluster of islands, and making directly toward the northern side of the lake already close at hand.

"I believe they are going to land!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Let's after them!"

A quick bend to their oars was his comrades'

response, and the light boat shot swiftly on in the direction the other had taken.

Having but one rocket more with him, Harry waited until he believed he was nearly in shore and then sent it off. He had chosen a most opportune moment for firing the pyrotechnic, as under its flash he saw the other yawl had already landed at an adjacent point, and Jack Howard was in the act of leaping out of it with the two banners in his hand. Then as the light died away he disappeared in the woods, while the boat immediately swung off from the beach, and went on up the lake.

"What shall we do now, Harry?" asked his companions, suddenly resting on their oars. "Shall we follow the yawl?"

"No! To the shore!" he responded. "Let the boat go; it won't leave the lake without Howard. I'll follow him up."

The boys dipped their blades at once, and the yawl soon touched the point where the other had been but a moment before. Jumping out, Harry said:

"Hang around here till I return," then he hurried into the forest after Howard.

Possibly a couple of minutes had elapsed between the landing of the two lads, and, when once within the shadows of the heavy trees,

Harry became aware of the hopelessness of his search. He literally had to feel his way over bowlders, around bushes, and was constantly striking some obstacle with a noise that must have been heard several rods distant.

Suddenly, realizing he was giving the lad for whom he was searching all the guidance he needed to keep out of his reach, Harry came to a stand-still.

No sound broke the stillness of the forest. Howard, if near, could not be moving about. He might, however, be so far away by this time that his steps could not be heard by his pursuer. Should he then abandon his search or go on?

Before he could come to a decision, the cracking of a twig a little way to his right sent him quickly in that direction.

The ground now showed a slight descent, and as he hastened forward, his toe caught in a root or vine with a force that pitched him headlong forward. As he fell his head came violently in contact with a huge tree trunk, and dimly conscious of rolling against some obstacle, he became unconscious.

CHAPTER XVI

IN A TIGHT PLACE

WHEN the unfortunate Harry regained consciousness, he found himself lying on the shore of the lake beside the yawl. It was early morning, and his three comrades were gathered about him.

"How do you feel?" Ed Willis asked, dipping at the same time a handkerchief into the water at his feet, and bathing the injured boy's face.

"All right, except my head," he replied, rising to a sitting position; "that feels as big as two. How came I here?"

"We waited for you until light," Rob Hunt exclaimed, "and then Ed and I started to look you up. We soon came across you lying senseless against a large bowlder on the edge of a narrow ravine. You'll have to tell us how you came there."

"Oh! I remember now," answered Harry, with a faint smile, "I heard a noise and ran in the direction from which it came, when I tripped my toe and fell headlong against a tree. I felt

the blow and had a confused idea of rolling against something, then I knew nothing more until I opened my eyes here."

"Lucky for you that the bowlder stopped you, or you'd gone down into the gorge and likely as not been killed," put in Willis.

"Well, Bob and I brought you to where we'd left Frank. That isn't five minutes ago; the cool water on your face revived you at once."

"Is my head cut much?" Harry now inquired, laying his hand on a spot on the edge of his hair which seemed very sore to his touch.

"The skin isn't even broken," responded Ed; "only a bunch the size of a goose egg and as black as your hair has puffed out there! but the cold water will soon bring that down. Do you feel able to go over to the camp?"

"Oh, yes," Wallace said at once, and with the help of his companions, he stepped into the yawl, and they pulled directly for the island.

They reached it in less than a half-hour, where they found Fred had a hot and bountiful breakfast ready for them. The strong coffee settled the nausea Harry felt, and the substantial food greatly strengthened him, so that when the meal was finished he was quite himself.

"There is this much about our fracas of last

night,'' he said as he and the other boys began to put the camp in order; ''if we didn't recover the banners, neither did our High School friends get off with them.''

''They are fully aware also that we don't intend to let them if we can help it,'' added Fred Williams, and then he told what he had called out to Jones and his crew as they waited off the island.

''That brings the struggle between us to a focus,'' said Harry; ''they now know our intentions and we know theirs. The question is which one of us shall win. For ourselves, we have scored one point. The tide has turned in our favor and we want to see to it now that we come in with the flood.''

In two or three hours, the encampment was set to rights, and then by turns the lads secured a little sleep.

Not far from eleven o'clock, however, a voice from the southeast shore of the lake called to them, and looking in that direction, they saw Tom waving his hands for some of them to come over.

Leaving Ed Willis in charge of the island, the others launched the yawl, and in five minutes had joined their returned companion.

He reported a safe run down to McPherson's

Landing and back. There was no difficulty in securing the tackling and rollers they wanted, and nothing now prevented bringing the launch around the falls.

Harry went down to the pool to consult with Ben about the undertaking, and found him so confident that the job would not be a long one that he decided to carry it through at once.

The launch was run under the huge oak, which was to be used as a derrick. A limb large enough to bear the weight of the vessel was then selected, and to it the blocks, through which the great ropes ran, were securely fastened.

This was not so difficult a task as it seemed at first sight. A small pebble was tied into one end of a stout cord and tossed over the branch; through this connecting line, the ropes that held the blocks were not only drawn into place, but wrapped several times about the limb, and then carried to a neighboring tree around which they were firmly bound.

Everything was now ready to attach the hoisting hooks to the bow and stern of the launch; and, having removed all her furnishings, and put out her fires, this was done.

Two of the boys then took hold of one of the pulley-ropes and three of the other, while Ben

with the end of the bow hawser in his hand, clambered up the bank to the place where the yacht was to be raised, and gave the word for the hoisting to begin.

Slowly and as evenly as possible the vessel was raised. It was hard work, and only by warping their slack rope about the trunks of adjacent saplings, could the lads retain the additional height gained with each heave.

Persistent effort eventually accomplished the task, however, and after a time the launch swung in the air on a level with the bank. Leaving the other boys to hold the suspended vessel, Harry ran to Ben's assistance; and, by securing a purchase around a tree some feet away, with the bow-line, they drew the yacht toward them as fast as their comrades paid out their slacking ropes. She soon rested firmly upon the rollers that had already been placed to receive her, and the hardest, as well as the most precarious part of their work was over.

With a hurrah, the other lads ran thither from the pool, and in a few minutes, a track of rollers had been laid to the water's edge, and the launch run smoothly over them into the lake.

To lower and gather up the tackling, and replace it on the vessel, to restore her furnish-

ings, and start up her fires, were but the labor of another half-hour; and, before two o'clock, the *Fire-Fly* steamed proudly off with the yawl in tow to the big island.

During the dinner that immediately followed their arrival, Harry related the adventure of the preceding night, and proposed that a tour of the lake be made in the launch that afternoon.

"I have no idea where those fellows have gone," he said; "but doubtless they are watching our movements, and I want them to know the yacht has been brought around the falls, and we are now masters of the lake."

Ben heartily seconded the proposition, so an hour or two later the tiny steamer with Harry, Tom Sexsmith, Ed Willis, and himself on board, began her voyage.

Along the shores, around the island, into the coves and inlets, she gracefully sailed, sending forth every now and then her shrill whistle, "just to let Jones and his crew know we are around," as Ben expressed it. She even ran up the brook to the old camping place of the High School boys, only to find it deserted.

When she passed the point where Harry met with his mishap the night before, Ed Willis asked:

"Why do you suppose Howard was put ashore here with those banners?"

"Because Jones expected us to overhaul him every moment, and took that way to prevent our recovering them," Harry answered; "but I wonder whether Jack hid them somewhere in those woods, or joined his comrades with them at some place agreed upon this morning?"

"Maybe they have camped out again somewhere in that region," suggested Tom Sexsmith. "There is a small brook running into the lake on the further side of the point, and, though not large enough for a boat, they could easily conceal that at its mouth, and pitch the tent in the gorge."

"That accounts for the one on whose brink I found you, Harry!" exclaimed Ed. "We might take a tramp over in that locality tomorrow and see what we can find."

The lads discussed the matter while they steamed down to the island, and the result was that early the next day Ben rowed the trio over to the point in his yawl, and they began their exploration of the forest.

Remembering their experience on the other side of the lake with the loup-cerviers, both Tom and Harry had brought along their rifles, while Ed carried his shot-gun, but he had taken

the precaution to load his cartridges with his heaviest shot.

On reaching the ravine where Harry had been found, they ascertained that it was the one through which the tiny stream that entered the lake at the west of the point ran.

Entering the promontory in an easterly direction and nearly severing it from the main shore, it then turned suddenly north, dividing a considerable hill into nearly equal parts.

Finding a place where they could descend into it, the three lads walked slowly up it. It widened as they advanced, and after the distance of perhaps a mile separated into two branches, one running to the northeast, the other to the northwest, around a small mountain spur.

Choosing the left gorge, which seemed the larger of the two, the boys continued their tramp. The ground as they went onward grew more rugged and rocky, and the sides of the ravine drew nearer together until they at length met in a precipitous cliff.

After consultation the lads decided to cross over the spur on the right into the other ravine, and return to the lake by that route. Hardly had they begun to climb up the hillside, however, before Harry, who was in advance, called

his companions to his side. Looking straight ahead they beheld a large black bear slowly ascending the rocky slope.

Their first thought, as she had not yet seen them, was to retrace their steps, and put as much distance between them and the ugly beast as possible.

Then came a desire to secure the prize, and, believing they should have a story worthy not only to relate about the campfire, but to tell at the academy halls, or by the firesides of their homes, they crept cautiously after the animal, hoping to secure a shot.

The path followed led them out upon an elevated rock, and from the top of that they caught sight of the bear entering a cleft a few rods beyond.

Knowing that she had gone into her den, they selected a hiding place within easy range of the ledge on which the cave opened and waited for her to come out.

In a few minutes she appeared, followed by two cubs. Realizing that their opportunity had now come, all three of the lads took steady aim and fired together. One or more of the shots must have reached some vital spot, for the beast rolled over on her back dead, while the cubs,

frightened by the unusual noise, scrambled back into the cave.

The boys now determined to secure the little ones alive, and crawled over to the cavern. The interior was dark, and the roof low and jagged, but the floor was smooth and thickly covered with sand.

They crept cautiously one after the other into the cave, first reloading their guns and carrying them with them. They soon reached the rear of the den, and groping about in the dark, finally placed their hands upon a growling cub.

With much trouble and many scratches, they secured it, and tied its four feet with a handkerchief. The other cub had squeezed itself into such a deep crevice that it was some time before they could pull it out. While tying its feet, the little light that entered the cavern failed, and all suddenly became blank darkness. They knew there could be but one cause for the gloom. The male bear had returned, and regarding their situation as most critical indeed, they braced themselves for a fight that must end with the death of the enraged beast or the loss of their own lives.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MISSING PELTS

"I TELL you, boys, we are in for an adventure now that no one can tell how it will end," exclaimed Harry, and considering the great peril he and his companions were in, there was a remarkable steadiness to his voice. "Ed's gun is valueless in the struggle with that brute, and the outcome will therefore depend upon you and me, Tom. Shoot first, and I will have my rifle ready if you miss. If we both fail—well—good bye."

The lads knew, even in the darkness, where their foe was, for the bear's eyes glowed like balls of fire. But, fortunately for them, the roof of the den was so low the animal could not spring directly upon them, and had to advance slowly, stretching out its body to its full length.

"Good bye, old fellow," Tom answered huskily, and then he aimed carefully at the approaching beast. The next instant a sharp report followed the snapping of the lock, and the

clearing of the smoke revealed the bear struggling at the boy's feet.

He drew back with a cry of alarm, for the wounded animal in another moment would have been upon him, when Harry coolly exclaimed:

"Keep quietly where you are, Tom; I will fire over your shoulder."

Then he shoved his rifle forward until its muzzle touched the beast's chest. Pushing hard on the gun, he pressed the trigger. There was a stunning report, a heavy groan, then all was still. The bear was dead.

Now another difficulty arose. The dead animal was wedged into the passageway so closely that the lads could not crawl over him. Their only hope of escape was to push the huge body out of the den ahead of them, and after a long time they, by their united efforts, succeeded.

Once out in the open air they wiped the profuse perspiration their exertions had started, from their foreheads, and then shook hands in hearty congratulation over the happy ending of their hazardous and exciting adventure.

"You don't catch me in a wild beast's den again, until I know the last occupant has been killed," Tom now said with a solemn shake of

the head; "but what shall we do with the beasts, Harry? Tumble them down the rocks?"

"I wish we might have their skins to carry back to the Institute," replied Wallace, gazing down at the shaggy pair at his feet. "Wouldn't the boys open their eyes in sheer wonder when they saw those fellows and heard the story of their capture?"

"You can just bet they would," cried Ed Willis enthusiastically. "Come let us strip the skins off."

It was new and hard work for the lads, and they were at least two hours in accomplishing the task, but at last it was finished to their satisfaction.

"There they are, Harry," Tom announced as he rolled the pelts into two enormous wads. "Now how are you going to get them down to the boat?"

"We can't do it to-night, especially if we carry the cubs," Wallace answered. "But we can put them in the cavern and block up its entrance so no wild beast can get in, and return for them to-morrow."

As the cubs were plump little fellows, weighing thirty or forty pounds apiece, this seemed the wiser course, and was unanimously adopted.

Rolling the nude carcasses of the bears down

the ledge to become the food of the wolves or other carnivorous animals, the lads brought out the captured cubs from the cave, and, storing the skins within it, blocked the mouth with huge bowlders. Then Ed took the guns, while Tom and Harry each shouldered a cub, and they began their long tramp back to the lake.

Ben was waiting at the point for them, and already growing anxious over their prolonged absence. The cubs they brought, together with the exciting tale they had to relate, fully explained their delay however, and hastening on board the launch, they ran swiftly over to the island.

The next day was Harry's to spend in camp, and, though several of the other lads volunteered to remain for him, while he went with a gang of helpers back up the ravine for the bear skins, he decided to keep his regular watch.

"Tom and Ed can guide you to the cave just as well as I," he said, "and all of you had better go on this trip. The pelts are heavy and the oftener you relieve each other in carrying them the easier it will be. Ben will be company for me."

Frank Reynolds, however, was feeling slightly indisposed, and preferred to remain with Harry.

"That will leave four of you to go after the skins, and by fastening them to stout sticks, two can carry a single pelt better than by any other method," he suggested.

The other boys consented to this arrangement, and called on Ben to set them across to the main shore.

"You won't be gone but a few hours," he responded, "and so I'll take you over in the yawl, and remain there until you return. I can amuse myself while I wait by fishing for trout in the brook at the mouth of the ravine."

Tom, Ed, Fred, and Bob, therefore got into the boat with the crippled lad, and they rowed over to the point near the gorge.

"Good luck to you, Ben, while we are gone," Tom called out as he and his comrades started for the cave.

"You'll think I've had good luck when you see the string of fish I'll have on your return," responded Ben merrily to his disappearing companions.

The morning was bright, the air invigorating, and Tom and his party by walking briskly reached the cavern in an hour; finding to their indignation the bowlders had been torn away from its mouth, and the pelts were gone.

"Can it be the work of wolves?" asked Ed

Willis in surprise. "I see they have picked the bones of the bears clean," and he pointed down the ledge where the carcasses of the animals had been tumbled the night before.

"No animal ever pulled these rocks away," Tom declared, emphatically, "for see, they have been thrown into one pile; then, too, there are no fragments of the pelts lying around, as there would be if the skins had been torn in pieces here. No, I tell you it is the work of human depredators. The pelts have been carried away."

"Who in the world would take the trouble to lug the heavy things off?" asked Fred Williams incredulously.

"Jones and his rascally crew," answered Tom promptly; "and I'd just like to run in with them for five minutes. I bet they wouldn't carry off anything else belonging to us right away."

This sentiment was heartily endorsed by his comrades; and with their wrath kindled into flame by this new outrage the boys began their return.

As they reached the junction of the gorges, Tom, who was slightly in advance of the others, suddenly stopped, and motioned with his hand for his companions to become quiet. Wonder-

ing what he had discovered, they came noiselessly to his side.

"Some one is coming up the ravine," he said, "listen!"

The quick, steady tread of two persons was clearly discernible, and the low hum of voices in conversation reached their ears.

Soon the approaching parties were near enough for their words to be distinguished.

"Are we near the mountain spur where the gorge divides?" one asked.

"It can't be much farther," the other replied.

"It is Jones and Howard," Tom announced under his breath. "They are coming up here for some purpose, perhaps for the banners. Quick into the cover of the bushes. We'll let them pass, and then follow them."

The next minute he and his comrades were concealed behind the adjacent shrubbery, and almost breathlessly awaiting their rivals' approach.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN UNPLEASANT WRANGLE

"I DON'T see what you wanted to tramp clear up here for, anyway. The banners are safe enough where they are," Howard a moment later complained.

"I know they are safe enough," Jones rejoined, "but they are too far away. I want them concealed nearer our camp, where we can get them at a few minutes' notice if we get a chance to run by our rivals."

"What's the use of carrying them off with us? Leave them where they are, and Wallace and his crew will never find them."

"But we can't tell what kind of a row those fellows may stir up when they get back to Melrose," remonstrated Reed; "they now know we are here, and we can't get out of the scrape as we might have done had we not been discovered. We may be forced to produce the flags yet, and we don't want to have to come way back here for them. Besides, we are not out of the woods

yet, and we may have to surrender the banners to get away."

"Caving in already," sneered Jack.

"No, I'm not," replied Jones, angrily. "I'm longer headed than you, and don't believe in burning a bridge behind me until I'm sure I don't want to use it to make good my retreat."

Before Howard could reply, if he meant to do so, an accident occurred which precipitated a meeting between the members of the two camps.

Tom had concealed himself behind a clump of hazel bushes, a little nearer the approaching boys than his comrades. Eager to see as well as to hear the new comers, he leaned one hand upon a sapling in front of him and with his other hand pushed aside the limbs to obtain an unobstructed vision.

The sapling proved insufficient to sustain his weight as he bent forward upon it, and, snapping close at the ground, it sent the lad headlong through the bush, almost to his rivals' feet.

Tom was equal to the occasion, however, for springing up, as his companions, recognizing the fact that a meeting with Howard and Jones was now inevitable, came flocking about him, he said:

"Good morning, Reed! Good morning, Jack!

I beg your pardon for coming so unceremoniously into your presence."

The two High School boys made no reply, and seemed by their attitude to be uncertain whether to stand their ground or to run away.

Noticing this, Tom, in a perfectly nonchalant manner, went on:

"It'll make no great difference, however; we've wanted to see you and ask you a few questions for some time, and I may as well begin now. Taking your last contemptible act first, where are the bear skins you have *stolen?*"

He may have put undue emphasis upon the last word. It stung Jones, and with heightening color he answered:

"Bear skins? I don't know what you mean. We haven't seen or touched any."

"I presume," replied Tom hotly, for he thought the lad before him was telling an out and out lie, "you will now go right on and say you know nothing about the *sharpie* you destroyed, or *the banners* you carried off. I used to think you had honor enough about you, Jones, to tell the truth, but association with a liar has made you a liar, too."

"Whom are you calling a liar?" asked Howard, fiercely, and toying with the handle of a revolver he carried in his belt.

"If the coat fits, you can put it on," retorted Tom, insinuatingly.

The language and temper of the speaker are not to be commended; but when it is remembered that he was still rankling with the wrath that the disappearance of the pelts had kindled within him, and was additionally incensed by the denial to which he had just listened, it will at least account for the resentment and strong feeling he was showing.

"I don't wear borrowed goods" was Jack's reply to Tom's insinuation.

"No, I ought to have remembered that; you *steal* them," Sexsmith promptly answered.

"Say that again, and I'll let daylight through you," cried Howard, boiling over with rage.

"It isn't necessary; I want nothing to do with you," replied Tom, cooling off a little. Then he turned to Jones:

"Reed," he said, "we overheard you talking about the banners, and know you have come up here after them. Haven't you honor enough about you now to return them to us, especially since we have harmed you in no way?"

"You haven't had the chance," Jones interrupted with a grin.

"Yes we have," replied Sexsmith; "the day you chased that otter up the ravine on the other

side of the lake Harry and I were concealed in the bushes, and actually went into your tent. We could have carried off every gun you had and your yawl, too, but we wouldn't. We only wanted our property, and that is all we ask now. Why can't you give the flags back, unite the camps, and make this a jolly trip for all of us?"

"What do you say, Jack?" asked Jones, turning to his companion, and there was perceptible in his tones a willingness to comply with the request.

"Think? That you are a sneak to favor any such proposition," Howard fairly yelled. "If that's your game, I promise you that you nor Wallace won't ever see those banners again."

His reply had its effect upon Jones.

"We refuse to give up the flags," he said; then he asked, curiously; "What are you going to do about it?"

"Just this," responded Tom, quickly; "we'll carry you and Howard to our camp and keep you there until you are willing to come to terms."

Then to his companions he cried:

"Look out for Reed, boys, I'll take care of Jack."

As he spoke he advanced upon Howard, who

was a few feet in front of him, when the cowardly fellow drew his revolver, and cocking it, pointed it full at Tom's breast, saying:

"Lay your hand on me, and I'll shoot you down like a dog."

Unintimidated by the threat, however, Tom seized his antagonist's shoulder. Whether Jack would have fired is a question. He was exceedingly angry, and might have committed an act at that moment he would have had reason to regret all his life, but he was prevented. Before he could pull the trigger of his pistol, some one jumped from behind a tree not a half dozen feet away, and swinging a stick through the air, struck the arm holding the revolver a blow that sent the weapon flying through the air to a distance of ten yards or more.

Then a voice rang out:

"Let Jones and Howard go, boys. Harry wouldn't keep them in camp ten minutes after you brought them there. Nor would he have you do a single thing here to-day to disgrace yourselves or him."

The speaker was Cripple Ben, and in order to explain his opportune presence at the junction of the gorges, we shall have to go back to the time his companions left him at the lake.

As Tom and his party disappeared up the

gorge, the halt boy pushed off the yawl from the point, and rowed around to the mouth of the stream that flowed down the ravine. Beaching the boat here, where it would be in plain sight, he took his rod and hobbled along to the little basin just below the rapids, the water was deep and quiet, but Ben felt sure beneath its surface lurked many a speckled beauty, and he prepared himself to make good the boast he had uttered as he parted with his comrades.

At the first drop of his fly there was a splash, the leader straightened out, and the boy began to reel in the line, muttering to himself:

"I've got a porpoise, I should think by the feeling. It's the biggest trout I ever hooked anyway. Just see him pull."

The fish was rushing around for dear life, dragging the line through the water with strange velocity, and making the reel sing with a degree of violence truly amazing.

Ben, however, slowly wore out his opponent until that creature grew sufficiently docile to permit him to draw him in. As he lifted him up the cause of all the mysterious pulling and hauling was suddenly manifest—there were two trout instead of one on the line—neither of which would have weighed a fraction less than three pounds.

"That's a good beginning," he soliloquized, securing his fish, and making a second cast.

This time he struck three fish—one on every fly on the leader—and how they made the water boil. It seemed as though they pulled in all directions at once. But Ben was cool headed and strong armed, and succeeded in landing two of the trio, larger far than those of his first catch.

"I've struck the place where these fellows live when at home," he remarked, facetiously, as he made a third cast.

He caught a handsome fellow in less than a minute, and this continued until he had twelve fish before him, varying from a pound and a half to four pounds in weight.

"If I keep on like this I shall load the boat before the boys return," he thought.

As his fly entered the stream for the thirteenth time, however, there was a huge break; the head and part of a body of a wondrous trout rose to the surface, and then there was business. The fellow had everything his own way also. He started straight for the open lake, and he carried fly and line with him. Ben had his rod, reel, and perhaps four feet of the line; the fish had everything else.

"There's nothing small about that, I'm

sure,'' cried Ben, ruefully, as he gazed at his despoiled pole, ''and the worst of it is I've no other fly with me. Well, I suppose I ought to be satisfied with this haul.''

He took the piece of line he had left, and strung his fish upon it, and was about to return to his boat, when he dropped suddenly to the ground, and rolled over into the bushes.

The reason for his act was soon apparent. Reed Jones and Jack Howard were passing up the other side of the stream.

The moment they had disappeared up the gorge, however, Ben was full of action. Picking up his crutches, he hastened to the yawl with his fish and rod, then he started up the ravine on the trail of his rivals.

He could go but slowly at the best, and had the brook to cross at the first available point, so he did not arrive at the juncture of the gorges until Tom and his comrades had met Reed and Jack. Stopping behind an adjacent tree, he listened to their conversation until Howard drew his pistol; then swinging himself forward, he by a powerful blow from one of his crutches sent the weapon spinning some yards away, and called upon his friends to abandon their purpose of capturing the High School boys.

His appeal was heard, and heeded. Fred, Rob, and Ed released Jones whom they already held, and Tom let go of Howard's shoulder.

The latter, finding himself free, turned upon the crippled lad.

"Take that for your interference," he screamed, plunging his clenched fist into Ben's face.

The blow was a powerful one, and the halt boy, taken unawares, went down before it like a shot.

"Shame!" cried Tom and his comrades, springing forward to raise the fallen lad; a cry in which Jones joined; then, catching sight of Ben's white face he turned and followed the cowardly striker in his flight down the gorge.

Tom raised the cripple to a sitting position, while Ed Willis ran to the brook for water. Before he returned, however, Ben had opened his eyes.

"I'm all right," he said, "and had I been sound on my feet would not have fallen. In a few minutes I'll be so I can accompany you back to the boat."

"We'll carry you," all declared; and in a few minutes they had constructed a rude litter, upon which they placed Ben in spite of his

remonstrances, and began their march for the lake.

"I took the yawl around to the mouth of the stream," Ben explained as they drew near to the end of the ravine.

They therefore carried him to that point to find the boat gone.

"Those rascals saw it and have run off with it; so there goes our last row-boat," exclaimed Ed Willis in disgust, the moment the discovery was made.

"To say nothing of my rod and fish," chimed in Ben with a tone that made his companions laugh notwithstanding the awkward predicament in which they found themselves.

"I wonder what those fellows will take next?" Tom added wrathfully.

"From these remarks it is evident that all believed Jones and Howard had stolen their boat, and yet had they looked closely along the shore they would seen there was but a single track, and that too large to have been made by either one of the suspected lads.

CHAPTER XIX

A MIDNIGHT ALARM

"I'D LIKE to know how we are to get over to the island?" said Rob Hunt, after he and the other boys had looked up the shore of the lake, and over towards the islands for the missing craft.

"We could walk down the beach until opposite the camp, and signal Harry to come over after us, were it not for Ben," Fred Williams suggested.

"One would be enough for that job," put in Ed Willis; "the rest of us could remain here until the launch came across."

"But it'll take some time to carry out that plan, and meanwhile the rascals who took the boat are getting farther and farther away," objected Tom.

"Can't we arrange so as to help along both of these purposes?" asked Ben. "Of course we don't know certainly which way the thieves have gone with the yawl, but probably up the shore, or over to some of the nearest islands.

We shall, therefore, need the launch to make a thorough search."

"Why not have two of you go up the lake, examining every cove as far as the main inlet at the west end? On arriving there they can wait for the steamer to pick them up. Then two of you can go down the shore until opposite the island, and swim over there. I suggest this course, for it will save time. Even if Harry saw your signal at once, you'd have to wait until he got up steam, before he could run across for you. By swimming across you would acquaint him with the facts sooner, and then too he could come up the lake as soon as the launch was ready for use."

"But that will leave you here all alone, Ben," Tom protested.

"Well, nothing will hurt me," he replied with a laugh; "and you can run in after me as you go up the lake."

"Then I'll be one to swim over to the camp," said Tom.

"I'll go along with you," volunteered Ed Willis.

This arrangement was satisfactory to Williams and Hunt, and they started up towards the western extremity of the sheet of water to search for the lost boat.

Tom and Ed a half-hour later reached a point opposite the islet, and making a rude raft of dry wood to convey their clothing, they, pushing it before them, began their long swim.

Twenty minutes after they emerged from the water at the north side of the island, where Harry and Frank were standing, for they had discovered their comrades swimming over, and walked up to that point to meet them.

In a moment Tom explained the situation, and Harry promptly gave his orders:

"Frank, hurry to the launch and light her fires; you'll find them all ready for the match. Tom and Ed, dress yourselves at your leisure, and remain in charge of the camp."

Then he hurried off to the steamer himself.

In ten minutes, by the frequent application of kerosene to the fires, steam enough was in the boilers to warrant a start, and away the *Fire-Fly* sped.

At the point by the ravine Ben was taken on board, and then a run was made over among the islands. No trace of the yawl was found there, however, and the launch was headed for the main stream at the west end of the lake.

Hunt and Williams were already there, and reported no signs of the thieves, though they

had carefully examined the whole north and west shores.

"They must have had time to reach the brook here before you fellows arrived at the lake," Harry said thoughtfully on receiving this report; "somewhere up its banks also is doubtless their camp. We must arrange a trip up there to-morrow."

"I don't see how Jones and Howard could have come up the lake as far as this before we reached the mouth of the ravine," Ben responded; "if they take the boat at all they must still be lurking around this part of the lake."

"You say if they took it," Harry remarked with evident surprise; "who else could have taken it?"

"I don't know," Ben replied shaking his head meditatively; "there is something mysterious about the boat's disappearance I confess, but I'd examine the island, and both shores more thoroughly before I returned to camp."

"It shall be done," answered Harry decidedly, giving the word for the steamer to move.

A thorough examination was now made of the whole upper portion of the lake, but not a sign of the missing boat was discovered, and at last the search was given up, and the searchers returned to their camp.

When the boys were all together again, there arose an earnest discussion about the policy best to adopt toward their rivals; and with the exception of Ben and Harry, there was a unanimous opinion that a systematic plan of retaliation should be arranged, and carried out just as soon as the other encampment could be re-discovered.

"When Howard knocked Ben down," said Tom hotly, "I thought the time had come to put an end to this whole business, and for one, I'm for following them up, and not leaving them so much as a crust of bread to save them from starvation."

"That's the talk," cried several of the other boys together.

"I am quite sure," remarked Harry, with rising indignation in his tones, and throwing his arm affectionately over Ben's shoulders, "that it will be well for Jack Howard to keep out of my reach for some time to come, or there may be a little unpleasantness between us. But how about the others? From what you say, I think Jones is relenting, and there is some prospect of a reconciliation with *him*."

"Yes," assented Tom frankly. "The conversation we overheard between him and Howard shows he was not sure yet but he

might want to settle things with us, and he did join in our cry of shame! when Ben was struck down."

"I suggest that we do this," continued Harry with the manner of one who was asking a great favor of his hearers; "let us find the other camp again and in an honorable way demand the return of our property; if the request is refused then we will take it, by force if necessary, wherever we can find it. But so far as anything that belongs to them is concerned I do hope we will still hold ourselves above doing it the slightest injury."

"How about *them?*" inquired Tom slyly.

"Well, I'm ready to admit that I don't want to hurt any of them if I can help it," Harry replied with a laugh; "but they mustn't hit Ben again, or as for that matter any of the rest of you, when I'm around. If they are coming to blows, I shall urge a manly self-defense," and he threw out his broad shoulders and made a pass with his fists at an imaginary foe with a dexterity and power that showed he would be no mean antagonist if forced into a contest.

"Harry is right, and you'll all agree to follow him in this thing, won't you?" Ben asked of the other lads, and the pleading look that accompanied his words won the day.

"Here are our hands on it, Ben," they said, and after a hearty shake around, all turned into their blankets but Rob Hunt, who was to watch until midnight.

The beat for the night guard was from the tent to the north shore of the island, and thence around the beach to the point of starting. The night was not very dark and Rob could have followed his path without much trouble, had not he been so terribly sleepy. His long tramp during the day had completely tired him out, and after the camp became quiet, he found it hard work to keep awake.

In fact he dropped into a doze two or three times as he came around to the west end of the islet and paused to listen for any unusual sounds. The last one must have been almost a nap, for he had a dream, in which he thought he was struggling with an antagonist who was striving to throttle him. Then he seemed to be overcome, and to fall heavily to the ground.

The fall was a reality and awoke him. Scrambling to his feet, he muttered:

"This will never do. I'll go around the island fast enough to keep me awake until my watch is up."

Along the south beach he ran at a dog trot. Passing around a small point, he came to the

little cove, opposite the camp, where the launch was kept.

To his surprise the yacht was loose, and slowly drifting out from the shore. Though but a rod or two away, he was no swimmer and dared not plunge into the water after her, so he ran to the tents for help.

"Harry, Tom, all of you, quick!" he called. "The *Fire-Fly* has broken loose, and is already some distance out upon the lake."

In a moment his companions were on their feet, and together they rushed down to the cove.

"There she is!" Hunt cried, pointing out the craft that was fast disappearing in the darkness. "Quick now, some of you fellows who are good swimmers, or she'll drift out of sight."

Tom, Ed, and Fred were already stripping off their coats, when Harry's voice startled them.

"These ropes have been cut," he said, "and the launch if drifting would go the other way."

Perplexed, alarmed, the lads gazed at the boat. No one could be seen within her; no steam was up; no oars were out; yet she was slowly and steadily going up the lake.

CHAPTER XX

LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE launch had nearly disappeared in the darkness, when Harry called out excitedly:

"I say, Fred, did you use up all the rockets the other night?"

"No, there are two left; shall I get them?" was Fred's hurried response.

"Yes, and be quick about it, please; then fire them over the boat. I'm going to swim after her," Harry answered; and, as Fred ran back to the tent for the pyrotechnics, he hastily removed his coat, and pulled off his boots, preparatory to his plunge into the lake.

Ed Willis and Tom Sexsmith followed his example, and in another minute the three lads had entered the water, and were swimming swiftly in the direction the tiny steamer had gone. They were not over a dozen rods from the island, when, with a whiz, a rocket passed over their heads, and bursting a moment later with a brilliant glare, enabled them by its sud-

den light, to discern the *Fire-Fly* at no great distance beyond them. Evidently they had gained rapidly upon her.

Spurred on by this fact, they redoubled their efforts, but had not taken a half dozen strokes, when they were startled by a loud cry that seemed to come from the bosom of the lake just in front of the launch. It was a scream of abject terror, so wild, so unearthly, it scarcely seemed possible that it could have been uttered by human lips.

"What's that?" asked Ed Willis in alarm, as he stopped swimming.

"I don't know," responded Harry as he and Tom also ceased their progress. The trio listened intently. The light of the rocket had disappeared, but through the gloom, they detected the dark form of the boat. She seemed to lie motionless upon the surface of the water. No sound of any kind, however, reached their ears.

"The launch doesn't seem to be moving now," Harry at last whispered; "let us go nearer."

Cautiously the boys swam on. Soon they were close to the yacht's side. Again they paused. They could now see the vessel quite clearly. No person was in sight upon her deck or about her hull.

"Ed, you stay here at the stern," Wallace whispered, "while Tom and I swim around her."

As noiselessly as possible, Harry moved along the starboard side, and Tom glided around the larboard, until they met at the steamer's bow. A few feet of her painter were dragging in the water, and seizing hold of this, the two lads, in turn, clambered up to the deck.

"Come on board, Ed," Harry called the next instant; "the thieves have abandoned the craft to her rightful owners."

His words were not only heard by the lad addressed, but in all probability, by the boys on the island; for as Ed started to obey the call, a second rocket shot clear over the launch, and burst some rods beyond her.

Then for the second time that fearful cry rang forth. It came this time from just beneath the bursting rocket, and Harry and Tom turned quickly and looked in that direction.

Under the momentary light, they saw the head and shoulders of an Indian. His face, on which was depicted intense fear, was turned towards the shattered pyrotechnic, and he was making frantic plunges for the nearest shore.

Ed also reached the deck of the vessel in time

to catch a glimpse of the fleeing redskin before the light faded away, and exclaimed:

"That's the fellow that was dragging off the launch. It wasn't the lads from the other camp at all."

"It does look that way—that's a fact," answered Harry with a laugh. "But did you ever see a more frightened scamp in your life? I shall remember his look to my dying day."

"I suppose he never saw a rocket before, and the first one scared him so, he let go the hawser, and made for the shore," remarked Tom.

"But he didn't scream out that time until the light was almost gone," suggested Ed; "how do you account for *that?*"

"Didn't you notice the stick of the first rocket lying a few yards from the boat's bow?" asked Harry with another laugh.

"I believe when the first rocket burst the fellow let go the rope and started quietly for the shore. Then the stick fell somewhere near him, or perhaps struck him plump upon the head. He thought we were trying to shoot him with some new fangled weapon. That's what made him yell out that first time, and explains too his screaming so quickly at the second rocket. He thought we'd hit him again sure."

This certainly seemed a plausible explanation

of the incident, and with considerable merriment over the result of their chase, the lads got out the sweeps, and slowly pulled the craft back to the island.

Arriving there, Tom, as spokesman for the trio, related to the other boys with great gusto the details of their adventure, and when the laugh, which his recital raised, had in a measure subsided, Rob Hunt remarked:

"If the Indians are prowling around, maybe it was some of them that carried off our yawl from the point."

"And really took our bearskins," chimed in Frank Reynolds. "You know Reed Jones declared that he knew nothing about them. What do you think, Ben?"

The cripple nodded his head approvingly.

"It is likely," he said, "and that reminds me that Tom and I found the encampment down the stream deserted, when we ran by there on our way to McPherson's."

"How did they get up here without our seeing them?" asked Fred Williams.

"There is nothing strange in that," replied Ben. "They come and go stealthily at all times, and they could have passed around the falls on the opposite side from our camp any night without attracting our attention. They

may be camping on the upper lake now for all we know, or among the hills surrounding this one."

"It looks as though they are near the other lake, for the fellow we saw to-night was making in that direction," said Harry. "Let's take a run in the launch up that way to-morrow, and perhaps we may recover our yawl."

A general assent was given to the proposal, and as the three swimmers had now exchanged their wet clothing for dry, all but the regular watch returned to the tent, and, notwithstanding the excitement through which they had just passed, were soon soundly sleeping.

The next day proved to be rainy; in fact for three days the rain fell gently but with little cessation, and the lads were glad to postpone their proposed cruise until better weather.

Late in the afternoon of the third day, however, the wind veered around to the west, the clouds scattered and the sun came out. Harry, Ben and Tom went down to the yacht to bale her out, and scrub up her deck. While engaged in their task Ben suddenly cried out:

"My! aren't those beauties?"

His companions looked towards the northwest end of the lake, whither he was pointing,

and saw a pair of male caribou feeding on the lily-pads in a small sheltered cove.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Tom; "what a chance for a shot! The wind is in this direction, and we could reach the east side of that bay without their scenting us, and pop them over. I say, Harry, let's get their heads to go along with our lynxes into the Institute museum."

"All right," Harry good-naturedly replied; "Ben, will you set us across to the north shore?"

The halt boy readily consented, and by the time the launch was ready for the run, Tom and Harry had cleaned and loaded their rifles for the hunt.

Ten minutes later Ben landed them upon the main shore, and they began their tramp to the cove where they had seen the deer.

Crawling well around to the eastern extremity of the little bay, to keep the wind in their own faces, they found themselves in easy range of the bucks, and each selecting his victim, fired.

The caribou Tom had aimed at fell where he was, but Harry's bounded to the western shore, and fled into the forest. It was evident by his gait, however, that he was hit hard, and, telling Tom to secure his own trophy, the lad started off on the trail of the wounded animal.

The crimson tracks were readily followed, and led directly back among the hills. Intent upon overtaking the deer, Harry took no note of the lapse of time or of the distance he covered.

At last he came out upon a small plain, shut in by precipitous and rocky sides, to find the buck standing defiantly at bay. It was but a moment's work for the boy to slip a fresh cartridge into his rifle, and then he took deliberate aim and fired. With a leap into the air the caribou fell back upon his haunches, and then slowly rolled over upon his side—dead.

With a shout of triumph Harry ran forward, and then paused a minute or two in hesitation. It was nearly dark. He had come a long way, and the buck would be a heavy load to carry back to the lake.

"I'll take the head off, anyway," he decided, and drawing his hunting knife, he knelt down to begin work.

Beginning at the shoulders, he skinned the neck back to the throat, then cut the head off, and wrapped the loose hide about the severed part, to prevent the blood from trickling upon his clothing. He then tied the hind legs of the carcass together with a small cord that he took

from his pocket, and suspended it from the limb of an adjacent tree.

By the time he had done this, it was dark, and to add to his discomfiture, a heavy ground fog arose. Catching up the head of the caribou, therefore, he retraced his steps toward the lake as rapidly as possible.

Soon he was unable to see a rod before him, and was compelled to slow down to a walk. For a half-hour he went on expecting every moment to reach the cove, where he had left Tom. All at once, he struck against a dark object hanging from a tree under which he was passing.

He put out one of his hands and felt of it. It was the body of the deer he had killed. He had been travelling in a circle as a person is almost certain to do under such circumstances, and had come back to the very spot he had left less than an hour before.

The discovery was far from pleasing. If he had not been able to find his way to the lake on the first trial, there was little hope of doing so now, as the darkness was unpenetrable.

Indeed, now that he thought of it, he was not quite sure he could find it at all. He was not able to recall a single landmark along the way he had come, of which he could be absolutely

certain, so little heed had he given to the ground on his way thither.

From this revery, he was rudely awakened by a short, sharp yelp close at hand. With alarm, he dropped the caribou's head he was carrying, and grasped his rifle for instant use, for he knew the cry was that of the mountain wolf, calling together his mates.

CHAPTER XXI

THE INDIAN CAMP

SOME minutes elapsed before Harry heard the cry again; and since it sounded no nearer, he would have taken fresh hope had not there been answering cries from the hills around. The call and the responses left no doubt that the wolves had scented their prey.

"It's the carcass of the caribou that draws them here," he thought, with some misgiving; "I'll go up the plain a way, and perhaps they won't follow me."

He picked up the deer's head, for he still had no notion of surrendering that to the approaching beasts, and with it under one arm, and his rifle under the other, ran in the direction opposite to that from which the yelps of the wolves had come.

He saw nothing in the darkness, and must have happened upon an unusually clear place; for he went some rods without meeting with any obstruction. Then he was struck violently

by the lower limbs of a hemlock. The sharp needles produced a smarting sensation, but he paid little attention to that, as he was already busy in mind with a plan of action which he believed must insure his safety.

Walking cautiously forward, he soon came to the trunk of the tree and found to his satisfaction it was a large one, being not less than three feet through at the butt. Laying down his bundle for a moment, he slung his rifle by its strap across his back. Then he took from his pocket a stout cord, similar to that with which he had suspended the carcass of the deer to the tree a little distance below him, and tied one end around the antlers of the caribou. The other end was secured to his cartridge belt. His hands were now free, and he speedily put them to good use.

Grasping the limb, which had struck his face, he pulled it down until he obtained a firm grip upon the branch at a point where it was large enough to sustain his weight, and drew himself up astride of it. Slowly working his way back to the tree trunk he found he could readily reach the limbs next above his head.

Untying now the end of the cord from his belt, he drew the head of the buck up to the branch upon which he was perched and firmly

fastened it there. Then he ascended the tree for ten or twelve feet, until he found a place where a junction of limbs afforded him a comparatively comfortable seat, and there he stopped to await developments.

Thus far he had been too busy with his plans for his own safety to pay much attention to the nearness of his savage pursuers; but, now they were completed, he was startled to find that several of the beasts were already jumping and snarling under the carcass of the deer only a few rods away. Nor was it long before a "dull thud," followed by the sounds of cracking bones and tearing flesh, told him that they had succeeded in pulling the body of the caribou from the limb to which it had been tied.

The snarls and yelps of the animals as they fought over their prey were anything but reassuring, and every fresh arrival was heralded by his hungry and disappointed howls, which added new horror to the situation.

Harry had little hope as he now listened to the medley of sounds, that the hunger of the pack would be at all appeased by what they had secured. Indeed, among so many it only whetted their appetites, and he sat in momentary expectation of having the howling throng directly beneath him.

Nor had he long to wait. It could not have been ten minutes that he sat there, when a series of sharp yelps told the ravening horde had scented his trail. The next instant, fully a score of the fierce gaunt creatures were clustered about the hemlock.

It was with a feeling akin to fascination, that Harry gazed downward into the sea of flashing eyes,—a sea, turbulent, ever changing, from the frantic efforts of the savage brutes to reach their prey, and yet a sea carrying below its gleaming surface the cruel jaws of death.

More than once, the lad drew his rifle forward to fire into the surging mass, but checked himself; for he knew that only five loaded cartridges remained in his belt.

"I may need them before I get out of this scrape," he muttered, "and where they'll do me better service than now."

After a while, his situation became monotonous; he was tired and sleepy too; his position upon the limbs was cramped and uncomfortable.

"I wish I had something to throw down upon those fellows," he soliloquized.

He reached his hand out and breaking off a small limb near him, was about to cast it down; but stopped.

"I believe wolves don't like fire," he commented with a chuckle, "and so I'll give them a dose."

He drew his match-safe from his pocket, opened it, and selected a lucifer. Then he struck it and applied its lighted end to the branch he held. The resinous needles burst at once into a flame, and he tossed the burning brand into the living mass below him.

It fell, still blazing, upon the backs of two of the animals, singeing their hair, and sending them with sharp yelps of fright and pain out from the pack into the surrounding darkness.

Greatly pleased with the result of his novel experiment, he broke off a larger branch, and lighting it cast it down. He followed this with a half dozen others in so rapid succession, that the horde was completely demoralized; and, with scorched backs, retreated to a respectful distance from the hemlock.

Had Harry contented himself with this discomfiture of his assailants, doubtless he would have had little further trouble with them; but elated with his success, he tore off still another branch and when it was ablaze tossed it out towards the cowering pack. Instead of falling clear of the surrounding limbs, as he had intended it should, it caught and held for a mo-

ment, communicating its own fire to them, and the next moment that whole side of the tree was in flames.

Unfortunately, too, the wind was from that direction, and fanned the fire through to the opposite side in an incredibly brief space of time. Surrounded by the flames, blinded and suffocated by the dense smoke, Harry let go of his perch and dropped to the ground.

In the light of the blazing tree, he saw the rocky slope of the hill but a few rods away, and ran for that, hoping to find some place of refuge before the wolves detected his flight. He reached the base however at a point too precipitous for him to climb; and before he could find a spot admitting his ascent, the pack was at his heels. A hand to hand struggle with them was inevitable.

As rapidly as possible he loaded and fired the cartridges he still possessed, and then grasping his rifle by the barrel, he used it as a club upon two of the brutes that were in the act of leaping upon him.

He laid them low, but others instantly took their places; his strength was nearly exhausted; in another minute he must have succumbed to his assailants, when with a shout, an Indian lad, bearing two blazing pine knots in his hands,

Fighting the wolves.

leaped down the rock, and dashed fearlessly among the wolves. With a wholesome dread of an element which had already scorched them that night, the beasts sullenly retreated from their nearly secured prey.

The new-comer now turned to Harry, saying in fair English:

"Take light, follow me."

With grateful thanks for the timely rescue, Harry obeyed, and with a blazing brand in one hand, and his empty rifle in the other, followed his guide along the hillside slope, and up this to the summit. The wolves, as though loth to surrender their intended victim, still pursued them, but with every thrust of the blazing knots, slunk back into the gloom.

In this way the two lads crossed the hill, and descended the opposite side into a valley where they entered an Indian encampment.

Several huge fires before the lodges, together with a half dozen barking dogs that rushed savagely past the new-comers toward their pursuers, effectually dispersed the horde, and for the first time in several hours, Harry experienced a feeling of safety.

Several faces peeped out of the wigwams at the young stranger, but without a word to any one, the Indian lad led Harry to one of the

larger habitations, and motioned for him to enter.

He did so, to find the lodge unoccupied. Another motion of the youthful guide signified that his guest was to remain there; then he himself disappeared.

Five minutes later, he returned with an abundant supply of food which without a word he placed before the hungry boy, and again withdrew.

Sticking his pine knot into the soft ground which formed the floor of the wigwam, Harry did ample justice to the repast. Hardly had he finished when the Indian had returned, and standing at the door of the lodge with folded arms, asked: "Who be you?"

In a few words Harry told of his camping party, and explained how he had become separated from his companions, and lost in the mountains. He also gave an account of his struggle with the wolves until his rescuer appeared, and closed his recital by asking his auditor how he happened to be so opportunely at hand.

"Me saw blazing tree, and took torch, and ran over hill, to see what it was. Heard gun, and de wolves, and come to help," explained the dusky lad. Then with a shrug of contempt

he added: "Wolf, him nothin': fight him with stick."

Harry was of a different opinion, but did not dare to dispute with his young host, whose familiarity with the wolf and its usually cowardly nature, made him regard it with such contempt. His only reply, therefore, was to express his gratitude again for the help rendered him, and to assure the young Indian that if he would accompany him to his camp the next morning, he would see that he was fully rewarded for his trouble.

"Me guide you to lake," the boy said proudly, "but want no pay."

He pointed to a heap of skins in one corner of the lodge, saying: "Sleep there."

A moment later he was gone.

Fatigued by the exciting experiences he had passed through, Harry slept soundly until morning, when he was aroused by a great commotion in the encampment. He was at first unable to realize where he was. The greatest confusion of noises reached his ears, but the barking of dogs and angry calling of men to one another finally brought him to a state of full consciousness. Springing to his feet he was about to leave the lodge, when there was a quick step outside, and then a dark form entered.

One glance into the scowling face that looked into his was sufficient to convince Harry that he had seen it only a short time before. It was that of the Indian who had attempted to carry off the launch, and had been so terrified by the rockets.

CHAPTER XXII

A STARTLING ACCUSATION

IT WAS evident to Harry that his own presence in the lodge had been entirely unsuspected by the Indian until the moment of his entrance, for there was surprise as well as anger expressed in his face. Then, too, he tried, ineffectually, to conceal under his blanket the burden he bore, which was no less than four shot-guns and their natural accoutrements of belts and ammunition.

Through the open doorway the lad also caught sight of several other Indians, dividing among themselves with noisy chatter the paraphernalia of a camp. His first thought was that a raid had been made upon his own tents. He understood therefore how undesirable his unexpected presence in the lodge must be to the robbers.

Another glance at the fowling pieces in the savage's arms, however, convinced him that he was mistaken as to the encampment that had been plundered. The weapons did not belong

either to him or to his comrades, and a suspicion at once came to him that it was their rivals who had suffered the depredations.

But even if this were so, a query arose in his mind, whether the thieves would not think that he belonged to the party they had robbed, and consequently regard his presence there as ominous to themselves. This would naturally lead them to make such a disposition of him as in their own judgment seemed most likely to insure their safety; and recognizing the fact that they were generally governed in their actions by little or no moral considerations, he awaited with no little alarm for his visitor to speak.

But the Indian did not seem inclined to do this. In fact, he evidently had quite another intention in mind; for placing the guns, one after the other, outside of the lodge, he dropped the accoutrements at his feet, all the time narrowly watching the lad.

Something in the man's looks as well as his actions suggested to Harry that he was preparing himself for a struggle, and the youth glanced instinctively at his rifle which was leaning against the side of the wigwam, where he had placed it the evening before, almost exactly between him and the Indian. Knowing it was unloaded, however, and that he was without am-

munition, he decided to trust to his knife for his defense when the necessity arose, and so he placed his hand upon its haft, ready for the drawing.

His movement was noticed by the Indian, who, perhaps, misjudging the boy's reason for giving up the rifle, leaped forward with a whoop and seized it. The next moment he had cocked the weapon, and was pointing it at the lad's head.

Serious as the situation was, Harry could hardly refrain from smiling at the advantage he still possessed over his antagonist. To draw his knife, and, regardless of the levelled weapon, plunge it into the redskin's breast, would have been an easy feat; and yet he could not, knowing the scamp's murderous intention, nerve himself to this. His regard for human life, even though it was that of an untutored savage, stayed his hand. He still believed, moreover, that he could appease the Indian's anger.

"You may as well put down the rifle; it isn't loaded," he said, coolly playing with the hilt of his knife.

The redskin must have understood him, but as if to test the accuracy of the boy's statement, he pulled the trigger. The hammer came down upon the empty shell with a dull click. Not a

muscle of Harry's face moved; indeed, he laughed aloud, and took his hand from his knife, indicating that he looked upon the embryo struggle as at an end.

The Indian lowered the weapon with a mystified air, and stood for a moment irresolute. Then he was pushed aside, and the lad who had rescued Harry entered. With a reassuring glance at his guest, he turned to the man, and, in his native tongue, made rapid explanations. As he talked the attitude of the older Indian became less defiant; then he set the rifle back in its place, and put out his hand to Harry.

"Camp-island," he briefly said.

Harry nodded.

"No your tings," he remarked apologetically, waving his hand toward the guns he had laid down, and those articles over which the other Indians were still wrangling.

Harry shook his head, saying:

"No, they are not mine."

As though that fact settled all ground for dispute between them, the man again shook hands with Harry; then he brought in his guns and laid them and their accoutrements at the rear of the lodge, as doubtless his purpose had been when he first entered.

He now turned, and speaking a few words to

the Indian lad in their own language abruptly left the wigwam.

"He my fader," the young Indian explained; "he say you stay here till you habe breakfast, then I take you back to lake."

"All right," Harry answered, and then as he was left alone, he commented:

"He don't mean I shall look around much, or remain any longer than possible. Well, let us see what I can discover from here."

By slightly changing his position, he was able to widen his range of vision from the doorway not only enough to make a careful count of the goods the Indians were dividing in front of the lodges, but to see a little farther down the clearing two large bear skins stretched on framework, and drying in the morning sun.

"I'm Yankee enough to guess where those came from," he thought. "If I could only see our yawl, my inventory of the stolen property would be complete. That, however, is probably concealed over on the stream with their canoes, and it's worth a trip up that way to learn if we can't find it. I wonder if the lad who rescued me is off of the same piece with the rest of these rascals. He doesn't act like it, and when I get him down to the camp, I'll see if I can't recover our property through him."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of the Indian youth carrying a rude basket filled with food, consisting of canned meats, preserved fruits, and crackers. Harry could not but feel he was taking his breakfast at the expense of his rivals, but with a resolve to supply whatever they should need from his own stores when he learned their whereabouts, he ate heartily.

Once the meal was finished the young Indian signified that he was ready to guide his young guest back to his friends.

"They look for you?" he inquired.

"Yes," assented Harry, "and for that reason I am in a hurry to be off."

"Then we go back the way you get lost," his companion said.

The fog had disappeared, and the sun shone out warm and bright. The tramp over into the plain where the struggle with the wolves had taken place, was quickly made, and there a surprise awaited Wallace. He found his deer head still tied to the limb of the hemlock, and uninjured.

The fire had started in the branches above that upon which the head rested, and the wind had quickly swept the flames upward and across to the opposite side of the tree, leaving the

lower limbs upon that side unscorched. The light cinders that had fallen from the burning needles were not sufficient to burn the antlers, and Harry had the pleasure of securing them, and continuing his way to the lake with them in triumph.

Before they reached the shore, he and his young guide met Tom and three of the other lads, following up the trail, in search of him. They gave a shout of delight, when they saw their leader unharmed, and were soon about him shaking his hands and calling for him to explain his prolonged absence.

"My story will keep until I am at the island where the other boys can hear it," he said; "but this is the friend through whose help I am now here."

He turned to present the Indian lad to his comrades, to find that he, while they were exchanging their greetings, had started back up the trail.

"Hold on, Oneco," he cried. "I want you to go over to the island with me."

"Me no need go now," the boy answered, coming to a halt.

"But I wanted to reward you for your services," explained Harry.

"Me want no reward," he replied, starting on once more.

"Wait just a minute, Oneco, please," cried Harry, and, as the young Indian stopped again, he said quickly to Tom: "Change cartridge belts with me, Tom."

Wondering what his captain was up to Tom obeyed. His rifle was exactly like Harry's, and before setting out upon his search for his missing comrade, he had filled his belt with loaded cartridges.

Seizing the full belt, and tossing the empty one to Tom, Harry now ran back to the waiting lad.

"Here, Oneco, is my rifle, and this belt of cartridges," he said; "take them and keep them as a remembrance of me."

The black eyes of the young Indian fairly danced with pleasure, but he hesitated to accept the gift.

"This is the way you load and unload it," Harry went on, "and the size of the cartridges is 44. You can get more at any of the settlements down the river when these in the belt are gone."

"Me go to settlements sometime," was Oneco's only reply.

Harry now pressed the rifle and belt into the

hands of the boy, and with a "good bye" started back to his waiting companions.

"Me have wolf skins up there?" inquired the young Indian.

"Certainly," replied Harry, looking around; "you are entitled to them all."

With a wave of his hand the lad disappeared among the trees with a stride that indicated he was hastening to carry out some purpose.

"Look here, Harry, tell us what you fellows mean by wolves, and what led you to give that redskin your rifle?" said Tom as his leader joined him.

"I was beset by wolves last night and Oneco, as I heard him called, saved my life," Harry answered. "But I will tell you all my experiences when we are in camp. Did you wait long for my coming?"

"Just as long as there was the slightest hope of your return," Tom responded. "Then I went back to the island with Ben who had run on up to the cove to see what was delaying us. This morning we started out to look you up, but the difficulty in following the trail prevented our meeting you sooner."

In a short time they reached the cove, where they found Cripple Ben and his launch waiting for them, and, embarking had run several rods

off the shore, when a shout attracted their attention.

Glancing around they saw Reed Jones on the beach, and he immediately called out:

"Will you come back here a moment?"

With some inkling of the reason why the rival captain sought this interview, Harry asked Ben to return to the bank.

In a few minutes they touched the shore, and Jones stepped on board.

"May I look into your cabin?" he asked.

"With pleasure," replied Harry, throwing back the hatch and inviting his visitor to enter.

He accepted the invitation with alacrity, and when within the saloon glanced searchingly about him.

With a look of disappointment he now inquired:

"May I look into the fore-hatch?"

"Certainly," was Harry's response, and he politely showed Jones to that quarter of the boat.

The rival captain's look of disappointment had changed to one of anger when he returned aft.

"Did you find what you were looking for?" asked Tom Sexsmith mischievously.

"No, but that doesn't alter the fact that you fellows have taken it," he cried wrathfully.

Then turning to Harry he continued:

"I admit you have now got the best of us; but I didn't suppose you were so mean as to take the last mouthful out of a fellow's mouth, and leave him nothing to get food with."

"What do you mean?" asked Harry, quietly.

"You are the last one to ask such a question," Jones sneeringly answered, "when you carried off last night in our absence our tent, and every article we possessed."

This startling accusation was too much for Harry's comrades, and they sprang to their feet with cries of indignation.

Harry alone preserved a smiling and unruffled countenance.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN HONORABLE PROPOSAL

HARRY waited until the indignant protestations of his comrades had subsided; then he said to his angry rival in half serious and half quizzical tones:

"I don't believe you have had any breakfast, Reed?"

"No, nor supper either," he sullenly admitted.

"No wonder you are cross; I should be under the same circumstances. Well, I had breakfast at your expense this morning, even if we didn't clean out your camp, and I resolved then to furnish you with whatever supplies you needed. So come on over to the island with us, and first satisfy your own hunger; after that we'll load up the launch and look up the rest of your crew."

There was no mistaking the honesty of this offer, and, a little ashamed of the anger he had shown, perhaps without just cause, Jones said more pleasantly than he had yet spoken:

"I don't understand you; how did you take breakfast at my expense, if you didn't carry off our goods?"

Harry's companions also looked inquiringly at him, though they had some inkling of his meaning. With a smile he explained:

"I was compelled to spend last night in an Indian camp back of these hills, and this morning not only saw a lot of your goods, but actually made a breakfast upon some of your provisions. I also discovered the two bear skins that the boys accused you and Howard of taking a few days ago; and I have reason to believe that some other things we have missed have been carried off by the same thievish hands. But it's a long story, and you are hungry; we'd better cross over to the tents before you hear it. I can readily prove to you, that whatever you and your crew have done to us, we have in no way retaliated except to prevent you from running off with our banners. We are moreover ready to help you in any way we can."

Reed Jones, whatever his jealousy over the Institute boys' victory in the boat-race had led him to do, was not without some good traits of character, as his protest against Jack Howard's striking Cripple Ben a few days before in the ravine had shown; and this frank, open-handed

offer of his rival to help him in his destitution, touched him.

Then, too, he and his crew were hungry, and, if Harry spoke the truth about their camping outfit being in the hands of the Indians, he knew he and they would be dependent upon the rival camp, not only for food, but also for the means to get back to their homes. He was, therefore, not slow to see the advantage of accepting Wallace's generous proposal; so pointing towards the shore he said:

"Bill Dunster and Paul Caulkins are up there in the bushes waiting for me; will you take them over to the island now?"

"Certainly, and go after the others if you'll tell us where they are," Harry promptly replied, looking around at his own men for a confirmation of his promise.

They realized that the special emergency for which Harry had wished—one in which he might be able so to befriend his rivals as to win them over to his side—had doubtless come, and yet they were not so ready as their leader to make use of it. They remembered the insults they had received at their opponent's hands, especially the striking of Ben by Howard, and, through Tom as spokesman, they voiced their own idea of the matter in these words:

"When these fellows are willing to give in that they have wronged us and make full restitution, we think it will be time enough to help them."

"I believe we can help them, and leave all that to their own sense of what is honorable and right," remarked Harry magnanimously.

"We can do that so far as the others are concerned, but not with Howard." Tom replied, slowly shaking his head; "he struck Ben down without cause, and has had more to do with the mean tricks played upon us than all the rest of the crew put together. Help the others if you want to, but let Jack apologize to Ben before he has a morsel, we say, don't we, boys?"

All but the cripple gave a hearty "Aye! Aye!"

"Ben has more to say about that than the rest of you," Harry said, turning to the halt boy with a smile. "We'll abide by his decision."

"Howard is in need as much as the others, and if he has injured us more, we have the greater triumph in helping him," Cripple Ben nobly answered.

"That settles it," Harry announced decidedly, and the look of affection he gave Ben

showed how fast the hearts of those two lads, so different in physique and worldly position, were becoming knitted together.

"Yes," put in Tom, heartily; "it does settle it. The launch is Ben's, and the supplies are yours, Harry; and you two are the ones that have suffered most by these fellows; the rest of us surely ought to show as good a spirit as you."

Jones had stood upon the deck of the launch a silent listener to this conversation. He was now man enough to say:

"Thank you, boys, for your decision;" then he called his two comrades from the bushes.

With considerable reluctance they obeyed the call and seemed surprised at the cordiality with which they were received by the Institute boys.

"Jack Howard, Tim Secord, and George Whiting have gone down the other side of the lake, looking for some trace of you and the goods we thought you'd taken," explained Reed when his two companions had embarked, and the head of the launch was again turned towards the island.

"We'll land you fellows first, and then keep on to the south shore for the others," Harry responded.

"I don't know whether Jack will come off to

your camp," Jones now remarked with hesitation. "He's been awful cranky for the last week and we could do little with him. Perhaps I'd better keep on to the other side of the lake with you."

"Very well, if you think best," said Wallace, "but we'll stop for you to have breakfast first. They have a longer tramp before them than you three did, and I don't believe they will come around to the falls before we get over there."

In a few minutes the *Fire-Fly* touched the landing at the island, and the two boys in charge were both delighted and surprised: delighted to see their captain once more and to find him unharmed; surprised that three members of the rival camp had returned with him.

A few words of explanation, however, put them in full possession of the circumstances which brought Jones and his men there, and they cheerfully bustled around to prepare a substantial meal for the new-comers.

As Jones was eating he said to Harry:

"I want to tell you my story now, before Howard gets here, as there are some things I can speak more freely about with him away. Since the night you gave us such a chase about the lake we have made our camp back of a rocky promontory, two or three miles up the main

stream. We got along comfortably until the rain set in three days ago.

"Our tent leaked like a sieve and we were soon as uncomfortable as we well could be. We had a hard time, too, the next day to find dry material enough for a decent fire, and when the second night came, we were ready to sell out at a small price. The weather made us all cross also, I reckon, but Howard was especially so. Nothing seemed to suit him, and he found fault with us all every chance he got.

"When the third morning came with the rain still pouring, it was more than we could stand, and we had one of the biggest rows that ever disgraced a camp-fire. Paul and Bill here sided with me, and Tim and George stuck by Jack.

"Soon after it broke away, in the afternoon, however, I proposed to Paul and Bill that we take a row up the stream; it would warm us up, and we might catch some fish for supper. They agreed, and, without asking the others to join us, we took the yawl and started off.

"Our action miffed Howard and his followers still further, and we'd no sooner gone than they sauntered off down the stream leaving the camp unguarded.

"Just about dark the boys here and I came back to the encampment in better mood and with

a large string of trout. What was our amazement to find that the tent and all our outfit had disappeared.

"Our first thought was that Howard and Tim and George had moved the things to some other spot to annoy us, and we foolishly went off to look them up, leaving our yawl unguarded.

"Climbing over the rocky promontory, we kept down the bank of the stream for a half-mile, where we met our comrades. They were astonished when we charged them with removing the camp, and forgetting our past differences, we all hurried back to the old camping ground to find that the yawl and its contents had been carried away in our absence, and we had nothing left but the clothes on our backs.

"As we had seen nothing of the Indians, we naturally laid 'the clean-out' to you fellows, and I confess that as supperless and cold we huddled together around the trunk of a hemlock, we didn't make a very good use of your names. When morning came, however, we were in a condition to compromise with you upon almost any terms, and believing that you could not have reached your own camp that night with your booty, we took an early start to look you up.

"After Bill, Paul and I had gone part way

down this side of the lake, we saw the launch lying off the cove, and concluded she was waiting for you fellows to bring the goods on board, so we hastened down there, but you had already started for the island when we arrived, and leaving the other boys hidden, I came out and hailed you."

Harry now told of his own experiences the night before, and held his little audience spellbound as he gave the account of his hand-to-hand struggle with the wolves and his timely rescue by the young Indian. His encounter with the old Indian in the lodge was received with equal interest by his auditors, and the detailed list he gave of the articles the savages had in their possession left no doubt in the minds of the High School boys but that their camping paraphernalia had passed into redskins' hands.

"I suppose there is no hope then of recovering the stuff," Jones remarked regretfully when Harry was done.

"I wanted to use the young Indian who rescued me as a go-between for that purpose," explained Wallace. "He seemed made of different material than the others, and certainly had no hand in the robbery. But I couldn't persuade him to come to the camp."

"There are Howard and his men now," Rob Hunt exclaimed, pointing off toward the south shore of the lake.

Three lads could be seen standing on the beach, and Harry and Ben, accompanied by Reed, entered the launch, and ran over where they were.

On the approach of the yacht, the boys drew back into the forest, but Jones, as soon as the boat touched the shore, leaped out and followed them.

He was gone some minutes, but returned with his friends. Secord and Whiting readily shook hands with Harry and Ben, but Howard merely nodded, and grunted out a surly "good morning."

With no notice of his discourtesy, Harry now invited them all to visit the island, an invitation they promptly accepted. The hungry trio were furnished with breakfast on their arrival at the tents. Then Harry said:

"I have talked the matter over with my own crew, and we are ready to give you fellows the choice of two things: You may remain here with us as our guests; or we will furnish you with our smaller tent, two guns, and enough of our supplies to make you comfortable, and you may camp where you please."

"Thank you," Jones answered gratefully, "I'll talk it over with the boys."

He called his crew and they walked off toward the west end of the island. A half hour later he returned to the tent alone, and said:

"The boys sent me back to ask you if you would be willing to guide us to the Indian camp that we may see if we can recover any of our own property, before we decide to accept either of your offers?"

"I will give you an answer in five minutes," Harry replied; and, as Jones withdrew, he turned to consult with his men. In less time than he had promised, the talk was over, and he went down where Reed and his comrades were:

"To recover your property," he said, "will require in my judgment two parties: one to go up the trail and over the mountain to the Indian encampment; the other to go up the stream in the launch to search for the boats. We will, however, join in this movement on one condition—that you return to us our banners."

CHAPTER XXIV

ON THE TRAIL

AS THOUGH conscious that the terms he proposed brought the estrangement which had so long existed between the two crews to a crisis—a crisis wherein it must either be overcome or fanned into a fuller flame —Harry now drew himself up to his full height, and looked squarely into the face of the rival captain. His whole manner and attitude were expressive with an unmistakable appeal to his opponent to act honorably and fairly.

Nor was the mute appeal without its influence upon Jones. The manhood in him was aroused, and extending his hand to the lad he had so persistently tried to injure, he said:

"I intend to do that any way. I promise you that on our return from this trip, whatever its issue, the flags shall be restored to you. Shall it not be so, boys?"

He turned toward his crew with both earnestness and determination plainly visible in his countenance.

"This miserable business we have engaged in is now to end so far as I'm concerned; who of you stand with me?"

It may be he infused some of his own noble resolve into his comrades, or possibly they dreaded the deplorable condition into which their refusal to follow their leader would necessarily bring them; whichever motive it was that influenced them they now with a single exception responded: "I," "I," "I."

That exception was Jack Howard, and, though both Reed and Harry noticed his silence, neither remembered that he alone knew where the banners had been concealed, and that the carrying out of the purpose, so heartily agreed to by the others, depended upon his cooperation.

Possibly both lads thought now that though Howard stood alone in his opposition to the project, he could not long hold out against the unanimous wish of his comrades, and they decided for the time to humor him in his obstinacy. Taking no notice, therefore, of his declination to answer, they hastened back to the tents to make ready for their expedition.

Cripple Ben was given the command of the launch, with Tom Sexsmith, Fred Williams and Jack Howard as his crew; while Rob Hunt,

much to his own disgust, was assigned to the duty of guarding the camp. This left eight of the lads, including Harry and Reed, for the overland force.

One gun was deemed sufficient for the armament of the yacht, and one for the protection of the tents. Four guns and one rifle, constituted, therefore, the equipment of Harry and his followers.

"What a pity, Wallace, you gave your own rifle to that young Indian," remarked Tom, as he witnessed this division of the firearms among the boys. "Now it may be used against you."

"I hardly fear that," his leader replied, with a light laugh. "While these Indians will steal anything they can lay their hands on, and might make away with a single person who had offended them, they would hardly interfere with a party as large as ours. It would involve too great a risk, and be likely to attract the attention of the government, of which they have a wholesome dread. The only thing for us to do is to keep a bold front, and but for that, I should take no arms along at all."

He did not add that he was relying upon the evident friendship of Oneco more than any other thing, not only to prevent hostilities between themselves and the Indians, but to secure the

restoration of the stolen property. Such, however, was the case.

At last the arrangements were completed, and the twelve boys embarked upon the *Fire-Fly,* which steamed swiftly up to the cove, whence the trail over the mountains began. Leaving Harry and his force there, she then ran toward the west end of the lake, where she was to enter the main inlet, and passing up that several miles, wait for the land party to rejoin her.

Meantime, Wallace and his men pushed steadily through the forest to the little plain, where the scorched hemlock bore witness of his stirring adventure of the night before.

"Oneco has been here," he exclaimed, as his party reached the rocky slope at whose base the hand struggle with the wolves had taken place. "He has stripped off those pelts, as you see."

His comrades had noticed the half dozen nude carcasses of the wolves as quickly as he, and Jones replied:

"That must have been a big job, and he can't be far in advance of us now."

"He'd make light of a task that would have taken us hours to finish," Harry replied; "and is probably now at the lodges over in the opposite valley. Come on."

He led the way up the steep hill-side to its

top, on reaching which, an exclamation of surprise escaped him.

His comrades gathered about him, and looked down into the valley, so near as to seem almost at their feet.

"The Indian encampment was certainly right there this morning," he said, pointing toward an open spot plainly visible from their point of observation; "but where is it now?"

Well might he ask the question, for not a lodge was to be seen! The open place where they had stood a few hours before was deserted. No one would have thought it possible that the valley had recently been inhabited even by a tribe of savages.

"We'll go there, anyway," said Harry, and at a tremendous pace he started down the precipitous slope.

In ten minutes he and his party were upon the site of the encampment. There were enough traces remaining to convince every lad of that, yet so skilfully had the obliteration been done, that a careful examination of the ground was necessary before they were found.

"This explains not only their haste in getting rid of you this morning, Harry, but the reason that young Indian left us so abruptly. They intended to leave for parts unknown before you

could get aid and return here," remarked Ed Willis, after the clearing had been fully examined.

"And there's no likelihood of our finding them either," said Reed Jones regretfully. "We shall have to accept one of your offers after all, Harry."

"We shall all the more gladly grant it now that we know you are entirely dependent upon it," Harry answered with a smile; "but we may as well work our way down to the main stream and join the launch. It will do no harm to keep on up to the other lake in her; and we may possibly overhaul the Indians if they have gone that way, for they cannot have had a great deal the start of us."

A tiny brook ran from the clearing toward the main stream, and Harry and his companions decided to follow this. It led them a circuitous route, and over rough ground, but brought them eventually out upon the creek they sought, several miles above the lower lake.

The *Fire-Fly* was nowhere in sight, and a lad was sent each way to look for her. The one who had gone up the stream soon returned, reporting that the launch was just around a bend a half mile away. The other youth was therefore called in, and then the whole party has-

tened up the bank to overtake the waiting boat.

Once on board of her they found her crew had as yet seen no traces of the Indians, and the ascent of the stream was resumed. Possibly the craft had made two miles against the rapid current, when, on rounding a sharp bend, the lookout forward cried:

"There's a canoe coming down toward us with one Indian in it, and he has another canoe or some kind of a boat in tow."

Harry and Reed went forward together.

"It's Oneco," Harry announced a moment after, "and he has a yawl behind him."

Though the young Indian saw the launch, he still came straight on down the stream. Evidently he expected, and was seeking an interview with her.

"Hello, Oneco," Wallace called when the lad was within a rod or two of them, "hold up and we'll run alongside of you."

The boy stopped paddling, and, as the steamer grated the side of his canoe, grasped her railing and leaped lightly on board.

He had taken care to bring his bow-line with him, and at once tied it to the larger craft, thus securing his own boats from drifting down the stream.

Then pointing to the yawl he had in tow, he said to Harry:

"That yours; bear skins yours; rod yours; fish yours; me bring 'em back."

Sure enough, in the bottom of the yawl were the two missing bear skins, Ben's rod, and a string of freshly caught fish equal in size to that the halt boy had lost.

"Yes, they are ours," Harry answered, "and we thank you for returning them."

"Me took 'em; not know they yours; thought they belonged to *him,*" and he moved his hand toward Jack Howard.

"The camp he belonged to has been robbed," Harry said sternly; "and I saw their things in your people's hands. Where has their encampment gone? We have been over there to see if they wouldn't return the property."

For reply the young savage strode up to Howard, and though much slighter and somewhat younger than he, drew himself up fearlessly before him. The movement took them all by surprise for none of them had any idea that the two had already met each other.

"See me before?" he asked, and there was a look in his eyes before which Jack quailed.

"Yes," he stammered.

"Me caught you then, me serve you so," the

lad cried, and to the astonishment of the other youths, and before any of them could prevent it even if they would have had they known the circumstances, he picked Howard up as though he were but a baby, and tossed him over the rail into the stream.

CHAPTER XXV

A MIDNIGHT DESERTION

WHEN the lads recovered from the astonishment caused by the young Indian's hasty act, their first thought was to secure and chastise the culprit. But as they sprang forward to do so, Cripple Ben swung himself in front of the savage, and, waving them back with one of his crutches, cried out in clear and ringing tones:

"Let him have fair play, boys! He wouldn't have done that without some reason for it. Nor has Howard suffered anything worse than a ducking, and he got used to that long ago. Give the Indian a chance to explain himself."

"All right," was the response, and while Tim Secord helped Jack from the yawl, into which he had already climbed, to the deck of the launch, and helped him in wringing out his wet clothing, the others turned to Oneco for an explanation of his singular action.

The redskin stood in a defiant attitude by the yacht's rail, and, even though the lads now

waited for him to speak, uttered no word in his own defense, until Harry laid a hand on his arm, saying:

"Tell us, Oneco, what he has done to you; we will *not* uphold him in his misdeeds."

The stolid face softened, a smile came to the stern lips, and in broken English the boy gave the following facts:

On the morning after Howard had been landed upon the northern shore of the lake with the banners, he and a younger brother were fishing in the stream, which ran down through the ravine at that point. Unaware of the presence of any one else in the gorge, they gave their whole attention to their sport.

The younger lad was upon the left bank of the stream, and some rods above his brother, who was on the opposite side. Jack Howard, in passing down the ravine, after hiding the banners, to join his companions at the mouth of the main stream, caught sight of the little redskin intent upon his self-imposed and exciting task; and, seeing no one else around, crept up behind him, and with a sudden blow sent him headlong into the brook.

His cries speedily brought Oneco to the scene, and having rescued the boy and learned from him that he had been pushed into the water, he

looked quickly around for the miscreant. Discovering Howard running off through the forest, he gave chase after him.

Unfortunately for himself, his delay in crossing the brook gave the culprit so long a start that he could not overtake him, but he got near enough to see the fleeing lad's features, and was sure to recognize him on meeting him again.

The telling of the audacious prank in the Indian encampment a few hours later, aroused a determination to retaliate upon the offender, and supposing there was but one camping party in the neighborhood, and that the one to which Howard belonged, the savages kept watch for a chance to annoy them and carry off the property of the white intruders.

Opportunities soon came; the bear skins were removed from the cave in which they had been stored; the boat left at the ravine point was run off; and an attempt was made to steal the launch.

Oneco had accompanied his father to the south shore of the lake that night, and there waited for him to swim over to the island and tow off the yacht. When their plan was frustrated by the firing of the rockets, they were forced to make a long detour around the west

side and up the main stream to reach their encampment.

In ascending the brook, just as morning was breaking, they came upon the camp of the High School boys, and a little watching convinced them that this was the one to which Howard belonged and not that which they had been plundering. From that hour the newly discovered tent was under the constant surveillance of some of the Indians until the chance came to rob it. Oneco belonged to the party that had been relieved by the one in charge of his father only a few hours before the robbery, and this accounted for his presence at the lodges, and his opportune rescue of Harry the same night.

Wallace's gift of the rifle as a token of his appreciation of the noble deed won the young savage over to the side of the white strangers, and he hastened back up the trail that morning with the already formed purpose of returning all the property his people had stolen from the island camp.

When Oneco's story was finished Reed Jones turned to Howard, who, having put on his wrung out clothing, was sitting on the sunny side of the launch for it to dry, and said angrily:

"So it's to some more of your tomfoolery that we owe the loss of our traps?"

"I don't see as I've done much worse than you have," retorted Howard; "any way I haven't grown chicken hearted over a few mishaps, and caved in like you."

The dispute between the lads would have waxed hot, for both had lost control of their tempers, had not Harry interposed.

"It will do you no good to accuse each other," he said; "your things are gone, whosesoever the blame is, and our business now is not to quarrel but to see if we cannot get them back."

He now asked Oneco to go with Reed and himself into the cabin where they could be alone. They talked long and earnestly with him about the other stolen property. He pointed out to the young Indian that Jones was not responsible for Howard's actions, and that the loss of the yawl and guns fell not upon the offender, but his innocent comrades. He suggested also that if Oneco would persuade his people to return the articles he had named, they might keep the rest of the camping outfit unquestioned, as he would supply the destitute lads with all else they needed until they returned down the river. But he found the boy obstinately opposed to giving back a single

thing. He seemed to think that Howard's connection with that camp justified his people in plundering it and stoically said:

"Me do no more for you now."

He told Harry furthermore that the launch was fast approaching rapids which she could not ascend, and that the upper lake was still many miles beyond them. To go there would not help him at all to secure an interview with his people, for they were not in that locality, but had gone where it was impossible to follow them.

A sudden call from the deck of the yacht that rapids were in sight confirmed the Indian's first statement; and, as there was no reason to doubt his others, the farther ascent of the stream, at Jones' own suggestion, was abandoned.

Oneco seemed pleased at the confidence shown in his word, and accompanied them back to the mouth of the creek. Then with the somewhat indefinite promise, "You see me soon," he entered his canoe, and paddled rapidly back up the watercourse.

It was late when the launch reached the island, and Harry told Reed that the offers of the morning were still open to him and his crew, and if he would make known his choice of

them, they would at once carry the chosen one into effect.

Jones replied that for himself, he preferred to stay where he was. One camp, and that on the island, was safer, pleasanter, and more readily cared for than two, with one of those upon the main shore; but he would follow the wishes of his companions.

When they were consulted, not even Howard, who since his unceremonious bath at the hands of Oneco, had kept aloof from his own campmates with the exception of Tim Secord, made any objection to staying on the islet. So this plan was adopted.

The smaller tent was cleared of its goods, and fitted as a sleeping apartment for the newcomers; the goods removed from it were then packed in the larger tent in a way that permitted it still to be used by its regular inhabitants, though it must be confessed they were in somewhat contracted quarters.

These arrangements were completed by sunset, and both crews amicably sat about one camp-fire and took supper together. After the meal was finished, Reed began to talk freely with Harry about the return of the banners, which he promised should take place early the following day.

During the conversation it was noticed that Howard arose, and followed by Secord, sauntered off toward the lower end of the island; but, as they soon returned, apparently in the best of humor, nothing more was thought of the circumstance. The hour for retiring came, and as Harry could now see no good reason for keeping a night-watch, the custom, for the first time in several weeks, was abandoned.

At midnight, any one looking into either of the tents, would have said all the occupants were sunk in deep slumber; had he continued his watch a half hour longer, however, he would have noticed that one of the boys in the smaller tent arose, and stepping quietly over his comrades, left the enclosure. Two minutes later a second did the same.

The two met outside, and whispered together for a few seconds; then the one who had first come out, stepped cautiously along to the larger tent and looked in. A glance seemed to satisfy him, for he immediately entered. He was gone several minutes, and when he came out, carried a rifle and a shot gun over one arm, while over the other he had two belts filled with cartridges, and two game bags stuffed with provisions.

He was immediately joined by the other lad, who had awaited his coming, and with whom he

divided his burden. Then the couple hastened down to the little landing where the launch and yawl were moored side by side.

Laying their weapons and bags in the yawl, the boys untied it, and pushed it gently off into the water. Leaping in, they noiselessly rowed out upon the lake. When clear of the island, beyond any chance of awakening their sleeping comrades, they settled down to hard work, and the light craft sped rapidly toward the northern shore.

The new moon came out just then from behind the flying scud that had momentarily hid her face, and her faint light fell directly across the heads and shoulders of the rowers. It was enough to show that one was Jack Howard, the other Tim Secord, and their whole action showed that they were, for some cause well understood by themselves, deserting their companions.

When it is recalled that Howard still kept the secret of the missing banners' hiding place in his own bosom, it can be readily guessed that this midnight desertion meant the thwarting of Jones' promise to restore them to their rightful owners.

CHAPTER XXVI

A HARD NUT TO CRACK

IT WAS not until morning that the other members of the united camps became aware of Jack's and Tim's desertion; it was at a comparatively late hour in the morning too, for not until the sun was high above the tree tops, and its beams dancing across the rippling surface of the lake, did any of the tired lads stir.

Reed Jones was the first to awake, and sitting up, he glanced down at his sleeping companions. He had no difficult task to ascertain that there were only three other lads in the tent besides himself, and that the two who had left were those that were least in sympathy with the reconciliation already effected between the rival crews. With some foreboding, therefore, of the very occurrence which had taken place, he sprang to his feet and rushed outdoors.

Opposite to him, and sufficiently near to come directly under the range of his hurried glance,

was the little landing of the island, and he at once noted an important factor in his self-imposed investigation—namely, the yawl was gone.

Hastening along to the door of the larger tent, he excitedly called out:

"Harry, quick, come out here!"

The next instant, not only Wallace, but all his comrades rushed through the opening, their half-dressed appearance showing that they had just aroused from their sleep, while their startled looks revealed that they suspected from Jones' call that something unexpected had happened.

"What's the matter, Reed?" Harry asked, glancing quickly about the encampment.

"See if any of your things are gone—guns, ammunition or provisions," was the quick response.

With exclamations of surprise the awakened boys re-entered their tent, followed by Reed, and began to overhaul their stores. A brief examination showed that two of the guns, their cartridge belts, and a small quantity of eatables were missing.

"That settles it," Jones added; "Howard and Secord have run away."

He then told of his own awaking, and the

facts he had discovered, which, together with the missing articles, confirmed beyond all doubt his first suspicions that the absent lads had purposely deserted the camp.

"Well, joy go with them," remarked Tom Sexsmith, with a characteristic shrug of his broad shoulders; "I don't envy them their trip down to the river, if there's where they have gone; or their camp out alone, if that's what they are going to do."

"But they needn't have gone off like sneak thieves," put in Harry, indignantly. "We would have allowed them to go without opposition and furnished them with all needful supplies, too, had they only made their wishes known."

"But don't you see," interrupted Jones, quickly, "they had a reason for leaving as they did, or at least Howard had, for he is the only one who knows where your banners are hid, and expects by his going to thwart my purpose of giving them back to you."

This announcement gave the listeners a flood of light respecting Howard and Secord's flight, but that light blighted their most cherished hope, and they for a time were dumb with chagrin and disappointment.

"Then he never told you where he put

them?" Harry at last recovered himself sufficiently to ask.

"No, you fellows prevented it," Reed responded. "Howard and I were going up the ravine after them that time we met Tom and his companions. You remember how the meeting ended, and Jack was so mad over my siding with Ben that I couldn't persuade him to go up there again with me. I should have insisted upon his telling where they were, long before this, had I any idea of his running away."

"There would have been no cause for his going had he told you that," Cripple Ben now suggested with a smile; "and this desertion was doubtless planned last night when the two runaways walked off together towards the upper end of the island. Harry and you were, at that time, laying your plans about going for the flags to-day, and I recollect you said they were in a cave near a big beech tree. Can't you trace them out from that clue?"

"I don't know," Jones replied, rather doubtfully it must be confessed; "I have no idea how far up the ravine Jack went, nor upon which side of the stream the cavern is."

"Tell us just all you *do* know about it, please," Harry now said.

"Well, it was awful dark, as you know, when

Howard landed upon the point," Jones continued, "and he had hard work to find his way. By a lucky chance he struck the bank of the gorge at a point where he could easily descend into it, and guided by the sound of the running water he kept up the passage until he felt sure you were no longer following him.

"When morning came he was near the mountain spur where the ravine divides, and followed the east division until he found the cave, the entrance to which was marked by a large beech tree. Perhaps we could find it."

"I don't see why we can't," Harry answered with the decisiveness characteristic of him when he had formed a plan of action. "Howard was on the east side of the stream when he landed, and naturally kept up that bank all the way; this led him into the east gorge and accounts for his taking that instead of the west one. Somewhere, then, on the right side of that passage we may find the cave, and get the banners."

"If Howard has not already removed them," suggested Ben significantly. "The more I think the matter over, the more I am of the opinion that Jack believed Jones knew enough about the hiding place of the flags to find it, and his desertion was to carry them off. Even if he and Tim did not leave camp before midnight,

they have had seven hours the start of us, and may now be sailing toward the river with them on board, while we've no small boat to follow them in. Whatever we may think of Howard's principles we must admit he's sharp, and, knowing it would take some hours for us to lower the launch around the falls, he has laid his plans, you may be sure, to get well out of our way before we can even begin our pursuit."

There was a reasonableness in Ben's suggestion that carried conviction with it, and Harry promptly replied:

"Then our course is this: We must first find out whether the boat has been dragged around either side of the falls. If so, then the chase is down toward the river, and we must find a way to overhaul the deserters before they reach McPherson's Landing. But if they have not gone around the falls we must divide into two parties, one to hunt for the yawl, and the other to go up the ravine. We have no time to lose either. Ben, will you and Tom get the launch ready? Meanwhile the rest of us will get breakfast, so that when the steam is up, we can be off."

Jones and his three camp-mates were eager to help in the search for their late companions and so two of the Institute boys were detailed

to remain in charge of the camp, while all the others boarded the launch the moment she was in a condition to start, and ran over to the south-east corner of the lake.

Here a careful examination of the ground was made along the bank to the pool below, but there was no evidence that a boat or heavy body of any kind had recently been dragged around that point.

"They haven't gone this way," Harry declared with positiveness after the search was over; "for the boat was too heavy for them to carry it clear of the ground for that distance, and we should find some traces of their work. We'll now cross to the north side."

Entering the launch, it was run up the lake until beyond the swift current created by the falls, and then across to the opposite shore.

All the lads but Ben leaped out, and began to examine the circuitous and uneven route about the cataract at this point. No evidence that the boat had been carried down was discovered, however, and Harry, with a ring of exultation in his voice said:

"We are in time, boys; the deserters have not yet gone down the stream. We'll divide now, and while a part of us go up the ravine,

the rest can march along the shore for the yawl. Hurrah!"

They returned to the lake, to find that Ben had run the steamer up the beach a few rods, and was eagerly examining the bank adjacent to him.

"What is it, Ben?" they asked as they hastened to join him.

For answer, he pointed out a place where the pebbles were wet from the water's edge to the grassy embankment above.

"Yes, we see it. but what of it?" several asked.

"The boat was taken out of the water there, and lifted up into the woods," he said, and then noticing the incredulous looks of his comrades, he added: "It is in the shadow of those trees, and the sun has not yet dried the drippings of the yawl. Search there and I promise you that you will find the boat no great distance away."

"You have sharp eyes, Ben, and but for you I'm not sure we should outwit those fellows at all," Harry remarked, as he entered the forest, followed by the other boys.

Three minutes later the yawl was found deftly hidden among the surrounding shrubbery. Its discovery was received with a shout

by the lads, which Wallace, however, quickly checked.

"Hush! we don't know how near the runaways may be," he said, "and our hope of catching them now is to leave the boat undisturbed, while some of you guard it. Two will be enough, which of you will volunteer for the work?"

Several responded to the call, but Bill Dunster and Rob Hunt were selected, and they hid themselves among the bushes, while the other boys re-entered the launch, and sailed away to the point, where was the entrance to the ravine.

"We may be gone some hours, Ben," Harry said, as he and his party landed at the mouth of the stream, "and perhaps you had better run back to the island. Should Howard and his companion be lurking around they will then get no clue to our movements."

"All right," the cripple responded, "and I will run over for you at six. If you want me before, fire off two guns and I'll hurry across for you."

The search party now began their advance, and not far from noon reached the junction of the gorges, where they stopped to eat the lunch they had brought with them. Then they passed up the right side of the stream, carefully exam-

ining every crevice that seemed likely to answer the description of that for which they were searching.

Four hours later they arrived at the end of the ravine, a huge cliff down whose side the water dashed in picturesque beauty to the shallow basin, from which it ran in ever increasing stream to the lake, several miles away; but not a trace of the cave had been discovered. In fact not a beech tree on that side of the gorge, great or small, was found beside an opening large enough to conceal the flags.

"We will return on the other side of the brook; it may be possible Howard crossed it before hiding the banners," Harry remarked, after they had stood at the foot of the falls a few minutes, admiring the scenery. "But we'll have to hurry to reach the lake at the appointed hour."

At a rapid pace, the lads made their descent of the gorge, looking on every side for the big beech tree. Once, just before they struck the main ravine, Harry thought they had found it, but on approaching nearer the tree proved to be a birch, and though it grew near the cliff, no opening was upon either side of the huge trunk.

"We'll have to give it up, boys," Wallace said with a good deal of chagrin at their ill-

success, manifest in his tones, when they arrived at the foot of the mountain spur. "Unless Bill and Bob have captured the deserters our prospect of seeing the flags again isn't worth much. Ten to one if we found the cave they wouldn't be there now."

Ben was waiting for them at the point, and on their embarking ran down the shore for Dunster and Hunt.

They reported no change in the situation since the departure of their comrades. Not even an animal had put in an appearance to relieve the monotony of their long watch.

"I guess they discovered us, and abandoning the boat, have started on their long tramp down to the river," Rob said on finishing his report. "We've been tempted all the afternoon to carry the yawl down to the pool, and push after them. Only man it now, and we'll overtake them before they reach McPherson's."

Harry shook his head.

"I think they have not intended to be off with the yawl before to-night," he said; "the careful manner of hiding it looks like it. Probably they are crouching among the hills somewhere until dark; then they will try to steal off. I propose we leave the boat where it is until morning, still keeping watch over it. I will

stand guard for one; who will stay with me?"

The whole party volunteered to a man, but selecting Tom Sexsmith and Ed Willis, Wallace sent the others over to the camp, promising if the deserters did not appear, to return at dawn to the island in the yawl.

Barely were the inmates of the encampment awake next morning, when Harry and his two comrades arrived. They had seen nothing during the night of the missing lads, and their non-appearance became a more perplexing problem than ever.

Had they concealed the boat purposely, to make their comrades think they were still in the neighborhood, and left at once for the river? Or had they, after securing the banners, discovered that the yawl was watched, and so giving up their original purpose of using it, set out on foot for the nearest settlement? Or had some misfortune overtaken the deserted youths, thwarting their plans altogether, and preventing their return to the concealed craft? Added to these perplexing questions was another; where was the big beech tree and its adjacent cavern in which the flags were said to be concealed; but which the most careful search had failed to find?

The boys discussed these and similar queries

while at their breakfast, but could reach no satisfactory conclusion about any of them; the general sentiment of the camp was voiced by Tom Sexsmith however, when after a long discussion, he said:

"My opinion is if we find those fellows, you'll find the banners; but *where* they are is a mighty hard nut to crack."

CHAPTER XXVII

A CRY FOR HELP

"WELL, what's our orders for the day, captain?" Fred Williams asked, half playfully and half seriously, after the long discussion was over.

Harry laughed.

"Ed, Tom, and I are going to turn in and get a few hours of sleep," he said; "the rest of you must decide for yourselves as to the course you will follow."

"Some of us might take the yawl and go down as far as McPherson's," Fred suggested, "if the runaways are tramping that way, we can overhaul them yet."

"I'm not sure they have gone that way at all," Harry responded; "I am completely at sea respecting their movements except in one particular. I'm quite certain they have fixed it so that there's little chance of our recovering the flags. But if any of you are willing to make the trip down to the river, it will settle the point as to whether they have gone in that

direction, and I shall be glad to have you go on that account if for no other."

"I'll talk it up with the other boys," Fred said, walking away.

Harry had reached the tent door, and was about to enter when Reed Jones joined him.

"Can I see you alone, Harry?" he asked in low tones.

"Certainly; there is no one in the tent; come in!" was Wallace's hearty answer.

"Do you still trust me?" was Reed's abrupt question when he and Harry were alone. "Do you believe I've told you the truth about the banners?"

"Of course I do," Harry answered promptly; "Howard may have deceived you about their hiding place, or you may have misunderstood him, but I believe you have honestly done your part toward restoring the flags to us."

"Thank you," Jones said, his face brightening at his comrade's words; "I am willing to give you another pair exactly like those, and no one but ourselves need know the difference," and he glanced wistfully into his rival's face.

"They would not be the ones we won," Harry replied as gently as he could; "and unless we can carry the identical flags back to the Institute, I'd rather return home without any. But

I thank you for the offer, and it is generous in you."

"I supposed you would feel that way," Reed reluctantly admitted; "but I'm not going to give up the hunt for the banners yet. Would you be willing to let me have the yawl long enough to go down to McPherson's, and see whether I can find any trace of the deserters?"

"Williams just proposed that trip, and has gone off to talk it up with the other fellows," answered Harry; "pick out a crew, and go down there by all means if you wish."

Jones hastened away, but came back in a few minutes to say that all of his own crew, and three of Harry's, Reynolds, Hunt and Williams, were eager to go on the proposed expedition. He stated, furthermore, that they could be off in a short time, and by rapid rowing would reach the river before noon. The return against the current of the stream would, of course, take several hours longer, but probably before midnight they could be back in camp again.

Harry readily consented to the arrangement, suggesting that if on arriving at McPherson's it should seem wiser for them to stay over night and return the next day, they were at liberty to do so.

In a half hour, the search party was off, and Harry, Tom and Ed, who had awaited its departure, entered the tent for their much needed rest.

Ben, left alone, resorted to his old pastime—that of fishing—for amusement. He had found that the southwest end of the lake offered the best opportunity for bass; and, starting up the engine of the launch, he ran over to the desired locality, and then, drifting slowly back down the lake, threw out his line for a troll.

A few minutes passed, and then a fish caught the minnow with a fierceness that ran off a hundred feet of the cord before the astonished lad could lay his hand upon the reel. Then there began a struggle for the mastery, intense in its excitement, exasperating in its uncertainty, and exhaustive in its duration.

Has my young reader ever had any luck in fishing for black bass? If so, he can understand the struggle in which Cripple Ben was engaged for the next ten minutes. He knows how the halt boy's arms ached, and his heart swelled with a feeling of triumph, when the gamy fish at last lay quiet enough at the side of the launch for the net to be placed under him and his capture made sure. Fully six pounds he weighed, and as nothing of his size had been

brought into camp by any of the other lads, Ben had a right to gaze upon the noble fellow with pride.

But he was to have that pride magnified another fold, for, five minutes later, his hook was again seized with a voracity that showed an "old settler" had captured it. A struggle, identical with the first followed, save at one time the bass leaped clear over the bow of the boat, entangling it in the line, and then dived into the depths of the lake, as though he would seek escape there. With an eye that watched every movement of the fish, however, and a hand that quickly freed the cord from every entanglement, the boy fought out the contest, and in fifteen minutes laid a worthy mate beside the first victim.

No other fish seemed to care to enter into a struggle with the young fisherman that morning, so he, well satisfied with his luck, put the tiny engine of the boat in motion, and steamed back to the island.

His companions were still sleeping, and Ben, intending to surprise them with a broiled bass dinner, cleaned the fish, and, with that deftness that long practice had given him, soon had one of them browning nicely over the fire.

Awakened perhaps by the savory odor that

filled the air, the three lads now came forth from the tent, and needed no second invitation from Ben to sit down and partake of the appetizing repast. During the meal the crippled lad told of his morning's exploit, and exhibited his uncooked fish to the admiring eyes of his comrades. The exhibition and recital together stirred the piscatorial fever of his companions to so great a heat that all of them heartily encored Tom's expressive but inelegant declaration:

"Hang the sleep! I wish I'd been with you."

Ed and Tom offered to clear up the dinner, and Harry and Ben walked off toward the landing.

"Ben, tell me just what you think of this affair," Harry said, as they moved off.

"The flags, or the deserters, or both?" questioned Ben, smilingly.

"Both," responded Wallace. "I think so far as the hiding-place of the banners is concerned that Jones has misunderstood Howard," he said. "There is no good reason to suppose that he at that time cared to deceive Reed, and I'm inclined to believe he said 'a big birch' instead of 'a big beech' tree. If so, why not the very one you saw near the junction of the

gorges? Jack would have hid the flags in the first good place he came across, and why suppose that he went very far up the ravine?"

"There is force in what you say," Harry admitted thoughtfully, "but I could find no opening in the cliff anywhere near it."

"How far on each side of the tree did you look?" Ben asked.

"Only a few feet," Wallace answered. "It was late, and we were in a hurry to reach the lake, where we knew you were already waiting for us, and so did not make as close a search as we might have done."

"I'd like to go up there myself," said Ben meditatively, "and by taking plenty of time I can walk as far as that. You know I did it once; that time I followed Reed and Jack."

"Yes," Harry replied, "and we'll go now, if you say so."

Ben gave an eager assent to the plan, and calling Tom to set them across to the point in the launch, they were soon on their way up the ravine.

By resting a few times Ben made the distance without great fatigue, and at last he and Harry stood under the great birch. While the halt boy again rested, Wallace examined the sides of

the gorge some distance above and below the tree. Then he came back to Ben:

"I see nothing like a cave anywhere around," he reported.

"Do you notice the formation of the cliff up there?" was Ben's response, pointing at the same time into the limbs of the birch.

Harry glanced above him, and for the first time noticed that the cliff twenty feet from the ground suddenly receded, and that two huge branches of the tree swept in over the shelving rock beyond the range of his vision from that point of observation. Quickly divining Ben's meaning, he ran off toward the brook a few rods, and then turned and looked up at the side of the gorge. An exclamation of delight immediately escaped him:

"There is an opening into the rock, but it is nearly hidden by the overhanging limbs. How is a fellow to get up there?"

Ben pointed down the side of the gorge a few feet, and Harry, following the motion with his eyes, saw there was a rough but accessible incline to a point from which he could readily catch hold of the branches of the birch and clamber into the cave.

In another minute he had made the ascent, and disappeared over the cliff, while Ben

patiently, but with some curiosity, awaited his return. He came soon, bearing in his hand a small piece of paper, evidently torn from the back of an old letter.

"I found the cavern," he said as soon as he caught sight of Ben, "but there was nothing in it except this note for Reed Jones, signed by Jack Howard."

He handed the paper to his comrade as he rejoined him, and Ben with some amusement read the saucy message it contained:

You are on the wrong track with your party, Reed, and should you ever dicover this place, which is very doubtful, you'll find the silk beauties gone. Sitting here and watching you and your gang, I can't help laughing over your disappointment, and I run the risk of leaving this note to let you know, if it comes to your eye, we long before it was found left here for down the river. Don't be so quick to promise a thing again, until you have asked the help of

JACK HOWARD.

When Ben had read the letter he handed it back to Harry, saying:

"It is evident that Jack and Tim were in the cave when you and the boys came up here searching for it."

"Yes," assented Wallace. "And that they

intended to go from here directly down the river."

Harry gave an affirmative nod.

"Do you suppose then some misfortune has happened to them?" was Ben's startling question.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Harry in amazement.

"Just this," replied he; "the way the boat was concealed, and also this note, confirms my belief that the runaways intended first to get the flags and then go down the river with them. But though you watched the yawl continually you saw nothing of the boys. It isn't likely they would have discovered you guarding the craft before you saw something of them, for you were concealed, while they were on the move. I fear then somewhere between here and the boat, something happened to upset their purpose, and that is the reason they have not put in an appearance."

"What could possibly have happened to them?" asked Harry incredulously.

"I don't know any more than you," answered Ben, "but if our men come back from McPherson's with no trace of the runaways, I should form a party and scour the whole section of country between this ravine and the north side

of the falls. I'm quite sure Howard and Secord failed to come back to the hidden boat, because they couldn't."

Ben's theory seemed hardly plausible to Harry, and yet so great was his respect for Ben's acuteness in getting to the bottom of such a matter, he readily promised:

"It shall be done."

The boys now descended the ravine, their steps hastened somewhat by the appearance of a large cloud in the West that suggested a shower.

When they reached the lake the sky was already overcast, and the low muttering of thunder, could be distinctly heard.

"You fellows are in the nick of time," was Tom's salutation as they stepped on board the launch, and without further comment, he headed the *Fire-Fly* for the island.

On landing they were surprised to find Ed Willis was not alone. Oneco, the young Indian, was with him, and he, pointing to a yawl moored at the landing, gave the following expressive greeting:

"There stolen boat; stolen guns in tent. How'd ye do?"

Harry at once understood the savage to mean that he had brought back the stolen property of

the rival camp, and he shook hands warmly with him. There was not time to hear his story just then, however, for barely was the launch secured, and the lads under the cover of the tent, when the storm burst in fury over the lake. The wind came in fearful gusts, the rain fell in torrents, the lightning was one continuous glare, the peals of thunder were terrific.

"I tell you this squall means business," Tom Sexsmith said, glancing up at the swaying canvas, and the creaking tent poles. "You don't suppose we'll be swept off into the lake, do you?"

"Hark! what was that?" Harry cried the next minute.

All listened. Then above the noise of the gale, they caught distinctly the human cry: "Help! Help!"

In an instant it was repeated, and this time farther away from the island, but nearer to the falls.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OVER THE FALLS

TO UNDERSTAND who uttered, and the circumstances which called forth that cry, we must go back and follow Jack Howard and Tim Secord in their wanderings.

On leaving the island they purposely avoided landing at either the point by the mouth of the ravine, or the northeast side of the falls, for they suspected their companions would examine both of those places as soon as they became aware of the desertion.

Choosing a spot some rods west of the falls, therefore, they landed, and, lifting the yawl clear of the water, carried it up the bank into the bushes, unmindful of the wet trail they left behind them, and which was not to escape Cripple Ben's sharp eyes.

Turning the boat over, they crawled under it, where they remained until morning. Then they hid the craft in the scrubbery, ate a hasty breakfast from the scanty provisions they had brought with them, and set out across the hills

in a direct line for the cave. where the banners were concealed.

Their route led them over a considerable mountain, from whose top they descended into a small valley almost entirely hemmed in by the surrounding peaks.

As they were crossing this, Jack suddenly came to a halt, saying:

"Look there, Tim, I believe there was once some sort of a settlement here. See those old apple trees, and just beyond them are the remains of a cellar. Who do you suppose was fool enough to live in this out of the way region?"

"I can't imagine," responded Tim, looking around him; "but it must have been a long time ago that they left, for the underbrush is growing all around the cellar, and there is quite a big tree coming right up out of it."

"That's so," chimed in Howard; "but what is that mound further down the valley? Let's go and look at it."

Turning a little to the left of their course, they approached an oval heap, rising a few feet above the surrounding ground. Its extreme length was perhaps fifteen feet, while its breadth was half as great; and though now

covered with heavy grass and bushes, it was undoubtedly the work of man.

Wondering for what purpose the curious pile had been constructed, the boys walked to its south end, where they found a large flat stone standing squarely against the mound as though covering an opening.

"I believe this is meant for a door, Tim; lets turn it over, and look inside," exclaimed Jack.

Grasping the rock at its top, the two lads strove to pull it away from the end of the heap, but it was too deeply imbedded in the soil to yield to their united strength, and they soon desisted from their efforts.

"I say, Jack, the west edge of the stone is free from the turf, perhaps we could work a stick under there, and pry it up enough to peep in," cried Tim eying the rock critically.

A stout stick was soon found, and with some difficulty worked back of the stone, in this manner it was slowly pressed away from the mound far enough for the toilers to look into the interior of the heap.

Getting down upon their knees, they, by turn, peeped through the opening. It was too dark for them to discern anything more than the faintest outline of the hole, but it was evidently

several feet deep, and as large as the mound itself, save the thickness of the walls.

"Ho! it's nothing but an underground cellar," said Jack in something like disgust. "We've no more time to fool away on it come on!"

Continuing their journey now over the hills, they, after a time, came to the ravine they sought, and descending into it, crossed the brook, and reached the big birch that marked the entrance to the cave.

Climbing into this, Howard brought from the rear end the banners he had hidden there some days before, and signified his readiness to depart.

Tim, however, declared he was both tired and hungry from his long tramp, and suggested that they should eat their dinner. Howard consented, and it was while engaged in their repast, that they heard their late companions coming up the gorge.

Keeping quiet themselves, they watched the searchers until they vanished up the east side of the ravine. Then Howard wrote the note which the next day fell into Harry's hands; after which he and Tim each taking a banner, began their return trip to the boat.

By the time they reached the valley, where

they had found the evidences of a former settlement, they were glad to rest their weary arms by laying down their guns, the flags and the bags which contained the remnant of their provisions.

As they stretched themselves upon the ground under the shade of a large maple, Howard said:

"I tell you, Tim, I'm a good mind to put these banners into that underground cellar. They are a nuisance to carry any way, and, if taken down the river with us, will make it easy for the boys to trace us out, should they try to follow us."

"All right," responded Tim; "this is a dish of your own cooking, and you can do what you please with the things."

Jack rose and went over to the mound. He found that the stone, left to itself, had dropped back into its original position, and calling Tim to his aid, they again pried it open. The moment their lever was removed, however, back the rock slipped to its place.

"I'll fix that!" Secord exclaimed, and looking around for a short limb, he put it in lengthwise between the stone and the mound, and found it answered the purpose of holding the rocky door ajar.

"There you are, Jack!" he continued; "toss the banners in, and then I'll let the stone back to its place."

"No, I'll get down in there, and you can hand them to me," Howard responded, and crawling through the narrow opening, he leaped into the pit.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed the next instant, "it's deeper than I thought. See, my head don't come anywhere near your level, Tim. How am I to get out, I'd like to know?"

"I can let down the lever for you to shin up," answered Secord. "Here are the banners," and he passed them through the entrance way to his comrade.

Howard took the flags, and winding them closely about their staves carried them to the end of the subterranean chamber.

"Run in the stick, Tim," he said a moment later, as he returned to the opening.

Secord drew back from the hole to comply with this request, but the movement started the loose, gravelly soil beneath him, and the next minute he plunged headlong into the pit itself. The jar of his fall shook the wedge that held the stone away from the mound from its position, and with a loud noise the rock swung into its place, shutting in the dismayed boys.

It was some time before they rallied from their astonishment at the misfortune that had befallen them sufficiently to realize the seriousness of their situation. When they did so, they were terrified at the outlook.

No one knew where they were; neither one of them was tall enough to reach the stone, and even if they could do so they had little hope of pushing it away from the entrance with their bare hands. What little food they possessed lay outside with their guns, and unless they found a way of escape that most lingering and torturing of deaths awaited them—starvation.

Even Howard was quick to realize the grave position in which they were placed; and, refraining from upbraiding his comrade for the part he had played in bringing the misfortune upon them, he bade him think of some way whereby they might get out of their dungeon.

Various means were tried before nightfall, but none gave the slightest hope of success, and tired and discouraged the prisoners lay down upon the damp bottom of their prison house to sleep. Fortunately, the stone did not cover the opening so tightly as entirely to exclude the fresh air, and there was no danger of suffocation.

Early morning found the lads hungry and

weak from their long fasting, and almost in despair. Howard was the more discouraged of the two, and could find no term quite strong enough to berate himself for the stubbornness which had led him to undertake the plan that had resulted so disastrously.

Secord was very quiet and thoughtful, and the frequency with which he examined the stone above his head showed he was maturing a scheme for their relief. Finally he said:

"Don't you suppose, Jack, that by holding each other up, in turn, we could tunnel under the rock, and work our way out?"

"We've nothing to dig with," answered Howard gloomily.

"Yes, our hands," added Tim desperately.

Jack was at last persuaded to make the trial, and as he was the heavier of the two, he raised his companion in his arms, and the slow, difficult job began.

It was but a minute or two that each could work, and before long their finger-tips became sore and bleeding. Again and again Howard was ready to give up, but Tim, with a persistence born of desperation, kept on, until there was a hole large enough for them to crawl through directly beneath the stone.

The ever increasing heap of dirt they cast at

their feet, made the latter part of the work easier to be reached, and enabled them also, when the opening was complete, to crawl forth. But when they were again in the fresh air, the sun was well past the meridian, and a heavy cloud was fast covering the sky.

They turned eagerly to their bags for the food they so much needed, to find them torn open and the contents eaten, probably by wolves during the previous night. Quenching their thirst, however, at a tiny brook not far off, they shouldered their guns and, still weak and faint, started for the lake.

When they reached it the coming storm was all ready to burst upon them, and to their dismay the yawl under which they had hoped to crawl for shelter, was gone.

"Come, Jack, let us give up, and go back to the island," Tim now said.

"How can we get there? We are too weak to swim over," he answered.

"We might halloo, and they would come over after us," suggested Secord, gazing wistfully over toward the island.

While Howard hesitated, the tempest burst in fury over the lake, and the lads fled to the shelter of a neighboring tree. It was a dead one, and upon the leeward side was a hollow in

which they crouched from the pelting rain. A moment later, however, came a tremendous gust of wind that snapped the tree, as though but a pipe stem, from its roots, and hurled that and the helpless boys out into the lake.

Rising to the surface unhurt, they tried to swim back to the shore, but the tossing waves rendered that impossible, and they turned toward the tree-trunk floating no great distance away.

Holding firmly to this they drifted along, until a dull roar reached their ears. They knew it was the sound of the falls, toward which they were driving at a furious rate; and, suddenly realizing the new danger that awaited them, they sent forth the piercing cries for help which reached the ears of Wallace and his comrades.

Rushing out from the tent and down to the lower end of the island, they caught sight of the unfortunate lads, and recognized their peril.

"We must try to save them," cried Ben, hobbling as fast as possible in the driving storm toward the landing. Harry understanding his object was quickly beside him, and a minute later the yawl (which Oneco had so providentially returned) shot down the lake pulled by their stout arms.

The wind was with them and they gained rapidly upon the floating tree. It was still some rods above the falls in fact, when they caught up with it, and pulled the well-nigh exhausted boys on board.

So intent were the rescuers upon their heroic purpose that neither, up to this moment, thought of any danger to themselves. They now found to their consternation that they were already being urged forward by the powerful suction that swept everything once within its grasp over the brink of the falls.

Ben had been the first to discover this, and uttered a sharp cry. Harry caught his meaning, and bending to their oars with an energy born of despair, they were doing their utmost the next moment to force the boat out of the channel to the shore.

Life and death were in the balance, and for a time they neither gained nor lost in their battle with the ruthless current. At last, however, it was clear that they had discovered their danger too late.

"It's no use, Ben," exclaimed Wallace, and his tones showed that he fully realized the peril they were in: "We have got to go over the falls."

The roar of the cataract became more dis-

tinct; trees and other objects on shore darted by with incredible swiftness; the blinding spray dashed into the faces of the lads with the keenness of a knife.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the brink. The rescued youths crouched helpless in the bottom of the yawl; brave Harry had taken in his oar; but Ben, even at that moment not resigning all hope, crept to the stern and tried to guide the boat where the water was smoothest. Then they shot out over the abyss, and went down.

CHAPTER XXIX

AULD LANG SYNE

THERE were several fortuitous circumstances connected with that hazardous plunge down the falls, which the lads themselves at a later hour were ready to recognize with profound thankfulness.

Ben's strong arm had steered the yawl some yards to the right of the vortex of the cataract, where the water was smoother and the current less strong; the weight of the four boys served as a ballast to the light craft and kept it right side up; then a powerful gust of wind struck the boat at the instant it dashed over the brink, carrying it in its tremendous leap beyond the rocks and the whirlpool at the base of the precipice into the quiet surface of the pool.

The result was, therefore, nowhere near so disastrous as naturally would have been expected; for though the yawl struck with a force that threw the occupants out, and completely swamped it, the lads were not otherwise injured. Clinging to the sides of the sunken

craft they slowly worked their way along to the bank, and crawled out under the great oaks where the Institute camp had first been pitched.

"I wonder if any person ever went over those falls before to-night, and came out alive and unhurt?" Ben said, when, with Harry's help, he had reached the foot of a tree which afforded him some shelter from the raging storm.

"It would be hard even now to make one believe it," Harry declared, gazing at the roaring cataract, "and all the world wouldn't tempt me to go over there again."

"No, we all agree with you in that, don't we boys?" remarked Ben, with a solemn shake of his head that added emphasis to his words.

Jack and Tim, who were crouching close to their rescuers, made no answer however. The narrow escape from death they had just experienced seemed to have dazed them, and beyond a mere look at the crippled boy, they gave no further recognition that they had understood his words.

"We shall have to remain here until the storm is over," Harry said to Ben some minutes later.

"It looks as though I'd stay quite a while longer, unless you fellows carry me," replied Ben with a faint smile. "My crutches floated

out from the boat, and went down stream with the oars."

"We'll find a way to get you back to the island." Harry responded, "and once there we can soon make you another pair. But what was that?"

The question was called forth by hearing the sound of footsteps in the forest above them, and the next instant Ed Willis and Tom Sexsmith came scrambling down the bank.

"Thank heaven, you fellows are safe!" they ejaculated as they caught sight of the four boys. "But tell us how you got down those falls alive?"

As briefly as possible Harry described their descent; then he asked:

"But how came you over here?"

"Do you suppose we could stay there on the island uncertain as to your fate?" exclaimed Tom; "not for a thousand storms like this. The moment we saw you must go down the cataract, Oneco, Ed, and I ran back to the launch. Fortunately the fires were not yet out, and we soon had steam enough to venture across. The wind drove us well down the lake, and tossed the steamer about like a cockle shell, but we managed to reach the shore a few rods above here. The Indian is looking out for the vessel

now, while we've hurried on down here to search for you. But come on up to the boat, it will be better than staying here."

"You'll have to carry me," put in Ben; "you see my sticks have gone down the brook."

"Tom and I will take you along," answered Willis.

"Let us drag the yawl out of the pool first," said Harry; "it isn't injured badly, and we can easily fix it up to-morrow."

Ed and Tom followed him to the water's edge, and under their united efforts the boat was pulled up under the trees and turned over. Then the three lads lifted Ben gently up in their arms, and accompanied by Howard and Secord, went up to the lake, and along its shore to the launch.

They found Oneco waist deep in the water, trying to keep the vessel from dashing heavily against the rocky bank; and immediately realized it would not be safe to leave her there while the storm continued from that quarter. It was fast growing dark also, and there was little hope of returning to the camp that night.

"We must work the launch along the shore and under the lea of that point," Harry said, glancing through the gloom towards a high promontory, that, heavily wooded, ran out into

the lake in a northeasterly direction, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. "Once there the rocks and forest will protect us, and we can lie quietly until morning."

"I don't believe we can get up steam enough to run up the shore against this wind," Ben remarked as his comrades put him upon the steamer; "we don't want to take another risk of going over the falls."

"Not if we know it," responded Harry emphatically; "so we'll push the boat up there during the lulls. Jack and Tim are all used up and had better get on board with you, Ben; the rest of us will do the work."

The four lads therefore entered the water to their waists, and began to push the *Fire-Fly* up the shore. It was a slow and laborious task, but they persevered, and at last reached the shelter of the point.

There was a secure harbor here, as they had expected, and securely fastening the launch, they all crowded into her tiny cabin. Though they had no dry clothing to put on, they found the protection thus afforded them preferable to an exposure to the night air or pelting storm, and stretching themselves out into as comfortable positions as their narrow quarters would

permit, they waited for the tempest to blow over.

A few minutes after they were housed Tim Secord feebly asked:

"Have you fellows got anything to eat on board? Jack and I haven't had a mouthful since yesterday noon."

"I'm sorry," answered Harry regretfully, "but we haven't a thing. We have had no supper ourselves, but that's nothing compared with you and Jack. I promise you the moment it is safe to venture across to the island, we'll go, and you shall then have as square a meal as we know how to get ready. Do you mind telling us now how you came on that tree in the lake?"

Secord looked at Howard, who nodded his head, saying huskily: "Go ahead, Tim."

Thus encouraged Tim told the whole story of his and his comrade's misfortunes until they had been picked up by Harry and Ben.

"You fellows have saved our lives at the risk of our own," he ended, "and Jack and I don't propose to hold out against you any longer. You shall have the banners as soon as we can get them for you, shan't they, Jack?"

"Yes," Howard answered in the same husky tone he had used before, and then he relapsed into his old silence.

A little after midnight the storm had passed over; the moon broke through the clouds, and thinking of Jack and Tim's needs, Harry gave the word for the return to the island.

They found the tents still standing, and though their fuel was too wet to build a fire in their stone oven, the boys by the aid of their oil stove were able to boil a pot of coffee, and get together a respectable meal.

Howard and Secord ate at first as though they would never be satisfied, but at last found an end to even their capacious appetites. Then without stopping to clear up the remains of their repast, all rolled up in the warm and dry blankets and went to sleep.

Not until a late hour the next morning was the camp again in motion, and the middle of the forenoon had come before breakfast was over. Then Howard, who had been silent throughout the morning, turned to Cripple Ben, and with flushed cheeks, asked:

"Will you forgive me, Ben, for the way I've misused you, not only here but at home?"

"Of course I will," Ben eagerly responded, and he placed his hand in that of the penitent boy's with a grasp that fairly made him wince.

Then Howard turned to Harry. "Can I ask

the same favor of you''—he began, but Wallace anticipated him.

''Here is my hand also, Jack, and I promise you bygones are forgiven and forgotten. Don't mention them again, I pray.''

''Thank you,'' replied Howard, shaking the offered hand. ''Now if you'll set Tim and me over upon the north shore we'll try to find the guns we left there, and to get the banners for you.''

''Don't go after them just yet,'' responded Harry. I'd like to visit the ruins of that settlement, and I know the other boys would. We have enough to keep us busy this morning to straighten out here at camp, and to bring back the yawl we left down by the pool. After dinner, however, we'll take the tramp over on the north shore with you.''

Jack consented to this arrangement and took hold of the morning's work with a heartiness that revealed more than any words could have done how perfect was his reconciliation with the lads he had formerly hated. As for Tim he seemed to feel Howard had set him an example, and he went from lad to lad, expressing his sorrow at the course he had taken, and proving by his acts how genuine was his repentance also.

The yawl had been brought back to the island, the camp put in thorough order, and dinner was well under way, when a shout from the south shore told that Jones and his comrades had returned from down the river. In a few minutes they reached the islet, and Reed was so surprised at the sight of Howard and Secord, and his long lost yawl, that he forgot to report his own trip until questioned by Harry.

"There isn't much to tell," he then said; "We reached McPherson's all right at noon yesterday, but as you know heard nothing of Jack and Tim; the storm prevented our return until this morning, and you can believe we worked hard to get back here at this hour."

Harry now told of the adventures through which he and his companions had passed during the absence of the other lads.

"Come, Oneco," he said after finishing his own story, "tell us now how you came to bring back the guns and the yawl. It was fortunate for Howard and Secord that you got here so opportunely."

"Me know you want 'em, so get fader to let me bring 'em back," was the Indian lad's brief tale, and it was not until some time after that Harry found out that the boy had purchased the restored articles with his own rifle, the wolf

skins, and some other articles he possessed, that had value in the old Indian's eyes.

During all this conversation Jones had said nothing to Howard, and Wallace noticing the fact, said:

"Here, Reed, shake hands with Jack; all the rest of us have made up with him, and we want you to do so at once, and then our reconciliation will be complete."

"I'll do that when he has restored the banners," replied Jones coldly.

"That'll be very soon then, for we are going for them right after dinner," responded Harry gleefully.

Ben with Oneco's help had been at work all the forenoon upon some new crutches; but they were not yet done, and so it was decided to leave those two lads in camp, while all the others went on the expedition to the abandoned settlement.

Landing on the shore at the place where the runaways had left their guns, the lost weapons were secured, and then the tramp over to the secluded valley was begun. In an hour the journey was complete, and the party stood before the underground cellar.

The strong arms of a half dozen boys accomplished what Jack and Tim had not been able to do, and the flat stone was turned completely

away from the hole. As the sunlight streamed into the opening, Howard himself entered the subterranean chamber and brought out the silk flags. Their appearance again, without soil or blemish, led the rightful owners to give three hearty cheers, in which Jones and his crew joined; and before their sound had died away among the surrounding hills, Reed placed his hand in Howard's saying:

"Here Jack, even our reconciliation is now complete."

CHAPTER XXX

NEAR OF KIN

CALLING the boys together, Harry now formed a procession, with one banner at the head and the other at the rear. Then they began their triumphant and it must be confessed somewhat hilarious march back to the lake. Embarking upon their yawls, they crossed to the main shore, where when they reached the camp they found Ben's crutches were done and Oneco was simply waiting for their return before taking his departure.

"We shall see you again," Harry said good naturedly, as he shook hands with the dusky youth.

"Me come, stay week, show you hunt, show you fish," he replied waving his hand so as to embrace the whole circle of the lake.

"Of course," Harry answered; "we shall be here for some time yet, and we'll be glad to learn your way of taking game and we'll teach you ours."

Oneco nodded gravely, and then shaking

hands with all the lads, not even forgetting Howard, he stepped into his graceful canoe and paddled away.

There is no need to dwell upon the joyous days that followed, or to tell of Oneco's next visit, during which Harry learned how he had bartered his rifle in order to return their yawls and guns to his white friends. The Indian youth stayed at the island until the camp was broken and the launch again lowered to the pool. As she steamed away on her home voyage, he watched her out of sight and then went back to his own people, richer far than he had ever been before, for every lad had found something which he insisted Oneco should keep as a memento of their acquaintanceship.

Nor shall we follow our young friends on their journey save to record a single incident. While running across the Bay of Fundy, they came up with a becalmed schooner, and the moment Ben read her name—*The Gamble*—he turned the launch from her course and steamed alongside. To the delight of the lads her captain and Mr. Brown appeared on the vessel's deck and there was general joy over the unexpected meeting.

"We are hardly strong enough to tow you into port," said Harry with a laugh; "but if

you are in a hurry, Mr. Brown, we'll take you along with us and drop you at Machiasport."

The invitation was gladly accepted, for that gentleman was anxious to make connection for Boston at the earliest practical moment. When the *Fire-Fly* reached that city Mr. Wallace met the boys. The launch, the banners and the articles designed for the Museum of the Institute were entrusted to the care of the High School boys, and they continued the voyage around the coast to Melrose. Tom Sexsmith, Fred Williams, Ed Willis, Frank Reynolds and Rob Hunt hurried away each to his native village, while Ben accompanied Harry and his father home, where the halt boy was always sure of a warm welcome.

The friendships formed on this memorable cruise were of that enduring character that they were sure to last through life. Reed and his crew gave a banquet to which all their old rivals were invited, and where Ben was the guest of honor. At the close of the feast, Howard, who sat at Ben's left hand, confided to him what soon became "an open secret" to all Melrose and the world: the High School authorities had by a unanimous vote decided to purchase the Institute buildings, consolidate the two seats of learning and place Dr. Randall at

the head. Rising to his feet, Ben announced the fact and proposed that all should drink success to the new enterprise in their glasses of cold, sparkling water.

"A fit emblem," he added as he held up his own glass, "of that crystal lake beside which the Rival Camps were blended into one. May there now be as happy an ending to the Rival Schools."

And the voices of the two crews mingled in the encore so perfectly they could not be distinguished from each other; a harbinger doubtless of what subsequent history has shown the fate of the united institutions to be.

Two hideous lynxes, two great black bears, two caribou heads, all stuffed to the naturalness of life, and two silk pennants, gracing the walls of the M. V. I. Museum, alone remain to bear witness to the fact that there were once two rival seats of learning in the town of Melrose, or two rival camps among the South mountains of Nova Scotia.

Nor is there any doubt that the happy termination of the long feud between the institutions was a direct outcome of the reconciliation between the two crews, from which sprang a public sentiment which led the town authorities to

make the important change which ended forever all jealous feeling between the schools.

So loyalty to the right won a victory of which Ben and his comrades never dreamed.

FAMOUS STANDARD JUVENILE LIBRARIES.

ANY VOLUME SOLD SEPARATELY AT $1.00 PER VOLUME

(Except the Sportsman's Club Series, Frank Nelson Series and Jack Hazard Series).

Each Volume Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth.

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

The enormous sales of the books of Horatio Alger, Jr., show the greatness of his popularity among the boys, and prove that he is one of their most favored writers. I am told that more than half a million copies altogether have been sold, and that all the large circulating libraries in the country have several complete sets, of which only two or three volumes are ever on the shelves at one time. If this is true, what thousands and thousands of boys have read and are reading Mr. Alger's books! His peculiar style of stories, often imitated but never equaled, have taken a hold upon the young people, and, despite their similarity, are eagerly read as soon as they appear.

Mr. Alger became famous with the publication of that undying book, "Ragged Dick, or Street Life in New York." It was his first book for young people, and its success was so great that he immediately devoted himself to that kind of writing. It was a new and fertile field for a writer then, and Mr. Alger's treatment of it at once caught the fancy of the boys. "Ragged Dick" first appeared in 1868, and ever since then it has been selling steadily, until now it is estimated that about 200,000 copies of the series have been sold.—*Pleasant Hours for Boys and Girls.*

A writer for boys should have an abundant sympathy with them. He should be able to enter into their plans, hopes, and aspirations. He should learn to look upon life as they do. Boys object to be written down to. A boy's heart opens to the man or writer who understands him.

—From *Writing Stories for Boys*, by Horatio Alger, Jr.

RAGGED DICK SERIES.

6 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $6.00

Ragged Dick.
Fame and Fortune.
Mark the Match Boy.
Rough and Ready.
Ben the Luggage Boy.
Rufus and Rose.

TATTERED TOM SERIES—First Series.

4 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $4.00

Tattered Tom.
Paul the Peddler.
Phil the Fiddler.
Slow and Sure.

TATTERED TOM SERIES—Second Series.

4 vols. $4.00

Julius.
The Young Outlaw.
Sam's Chance.
The Telegraph Boy.

CAMPAIGN SERIES.

3 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $3.00

Frank's Campaign.
Charlie Codman's Cruise
Paul Prescott's Charge.

LUCK AND PLUCK SERIES—First Series.

4 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $4.00

Luck and Pluck.
Sink or Swim.
Strong and Steady.
Strive and Succeed.

LUCK AND PLUCK SERIES—Second Series.

4 vols. $4.00

Try and Trust. Risen from the Ranks.
Bound to Rise. Herbert Carter's Legacy.

BRAVE AND BOLD SERIES.

4 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $4.00

Brave and Bold. Shifting for Himself.
Jack's Ward. Wait and Hope.

NEW WORLD SERIES.

3 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $3.00

Digging for Gold. Facing the World. In a New World

VICTORY SERIES.

3 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $3.00

Only an Irish Boy. Adrift in the City.
Victor Vane, or the Young Secretary.

FRANK AND FEARLESS SERIES.

3 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $3.00

Frank Hunter's Peril. Frank and Fearless.
The Young Salesman.

GOOD FORTUNE LIBRARY.

3 vols. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $3.00

Walter Sherwood's Probation. A Boy's Fortune.
The Young Bank Messenger.

RUPERT'S AMBITION.

1 vol. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $1.00

JED, THE POOR-HOUSE BOY.

1 vol. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. $1.00

EDWARD S. ELLIS.

EDWARD S. ELLIS, the popular writer of boys' books, is a native of Ohio, where he was born somewhat more than a half-century ago. His father was a famous hunter and rifle shot, and it was doubtless his exploits and those of his associates, with their tales of adventure which gave the son his taste for the breezy backwoods and for depicting the stirring life of the early settlers on the frontier.

Mr. Ellis began writing at an early age and his work was acceptable from the first. His parents removed to New Jersey while he was a boy and he was graduated from the State Normal School and became a member of the faculty while still in his teens. He was afterward principal of the Trenton High School, a trustee and then superintendent of schools. By that time his services as a writer had become so pronounced that he gave his entire attention to literature. He was an exceptionally successful teacher and wrote a number of text-books for schools, all of which met with high favor. For these and his historical productions, Princeton College conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts.

The high moral character, the clean, manly tendencies and the admirable literary style of Mr. Ellis' stories have made him as popular on the other side of the Atlantic as in this country. A leading paper remarked some time since, that no mother need hesitate to place in the hands of her boy any book written by Mr. Ellis. They are found in the leading Sunday-school libraries, where, as may well be believed, they are in wide demand and do much good by their sound, wholesome lessons which render them as acceptable to parents as to their children. All of his books published by Henry T. Coates & Co. are re-issued in London, and many have been translated into other languages. Mr. Ellis is a writer of varied accomplishments, and, in addition to his stories, is the author of historical works, of a number of pieces of pop-

ular music and has made several valuable inventions. Mr. Ellis is in the prime of his mental and physical powers, and great as have been the merits of his past achievements, there is reason to look for more brilliant productions from his pen in the near future.

DEERFOOT SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Hunters of the Ozark. The Last War Trail.
Camp in the Mountains.

LOG CABIN SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Lost Trail. Footprints in the Forest.
Camp-Fire and Wigwam.

BOY PIONEER SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Ned in the Block-House. Ned on the River.
Ned in the Woods.

THE NORTHWEST SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Two Boys in Wyoming. Cowmen and Rustlers.
A Strange Craft and its Wonderful Voyage.

BOONE AND KENTON SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Shod with Silence. In the Days of the Pioneers.
Phantom of the River.

IRON HEART, WAR CHIEF OF THE IROQUOIS.

1 vol. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $1.00

THE NEW DEERFOOT SERIES.

3 vols. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. $3.00

Deerfoot in the Forest. Deerfoot on the Prairie.
Deerfoot in the Mountains.

x COLONIAL SERIES.

3 vols. By E. S. Ellis.
12mo. Cloth. $3 00

x An American King.
x The Cromwell of Virginia.
x The Last Emperor of the Old Dominion.

WAR CHIEF SERIES.

3 vols. By E. S. Ellis.
12mo. Cloth. 3 00

Iron Heart, War Chief of the Iroquois.
Blazing Arrow.
Red Eagle.

TRUE GRIT SERIES.

3 vols. By E. S. Ellis.
12mo. Cloth. 3 00

Jim and Joe.
Dorsey, the Young Inventor.
Secret of Coffin Island.

UP AND DOING SERIES.

3 vols. By E. S. Ellis.
12mo. Cloth. 2 25

Limber Lew. A Hunt on Snowshoes.
The Cruise of the Fire fly.

FOREIGN ADVENTURE SERIES.

3 vols. By E. S. Ellis.
12mo. Cloth. 3 00

Lost in the Forbidden Land.
River and Jungle.
The Hunt of the White Elephant.

Out of the Hurly-Burly.

By MAX ADELER,

Author of "Captain Bluitt," "The Quakeress," etc., etc.

WITH 400 ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. B. FROST AND OTHERS.

A BOOK WITH A RECORD.

Max Adeler's "Out of the Hurly-Burly" has a notable history. It was first published more than thirty years ago, and every year since that time there has been a large demand for it. The total sales for the American and English editions probably approximate one million copies.

The book contains nearly four hundred of the first drawings made by the now eminent artist A. B. Frost, and is interesting upon that account.

It had even larger popularity in Great Britain that in the United States. It has been translated into several languages, and copies of it have gone literally to the end of the earth. A friend of the author's, shipwrecked on the coast of Norway a few years ago, got ashore and found refuge in a fisherman's lonely hut. The first thing he saw upon entering the building was a Swedish translation of "Out of the Hurly-Burly" lying on a table, and it made him feel at home at once. Another friend discovered the book in the cabin of a steamer a thousand miles up a river in China. Cheering reports have floated in from India respecting it, and innumerable tales have come to the auther of the pleasure it has afforded to invalids and to the sorrowing, and of the joy it has given to young people all over the world.

The demand for "Out of the Hurly-Burly" continues. In fact, it is beginning again to increase. Of how many books published in 1874 can this be said?

The new generation is learning, as its predecessors did, that here is a book of hearty fun and genuine sentiment, which contains no word that can give offence, and which contributes liberally to society's stock of cheerfulness.

For more than a third of a century it has supplied innocent mirth to a world in which kindly humor is by no means an abundant commodity, and the promise is that it will have undiminished benefaction for generations still to come.

12mo, Cloth, extra . . . . $1.25.

THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO., Publishers,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.